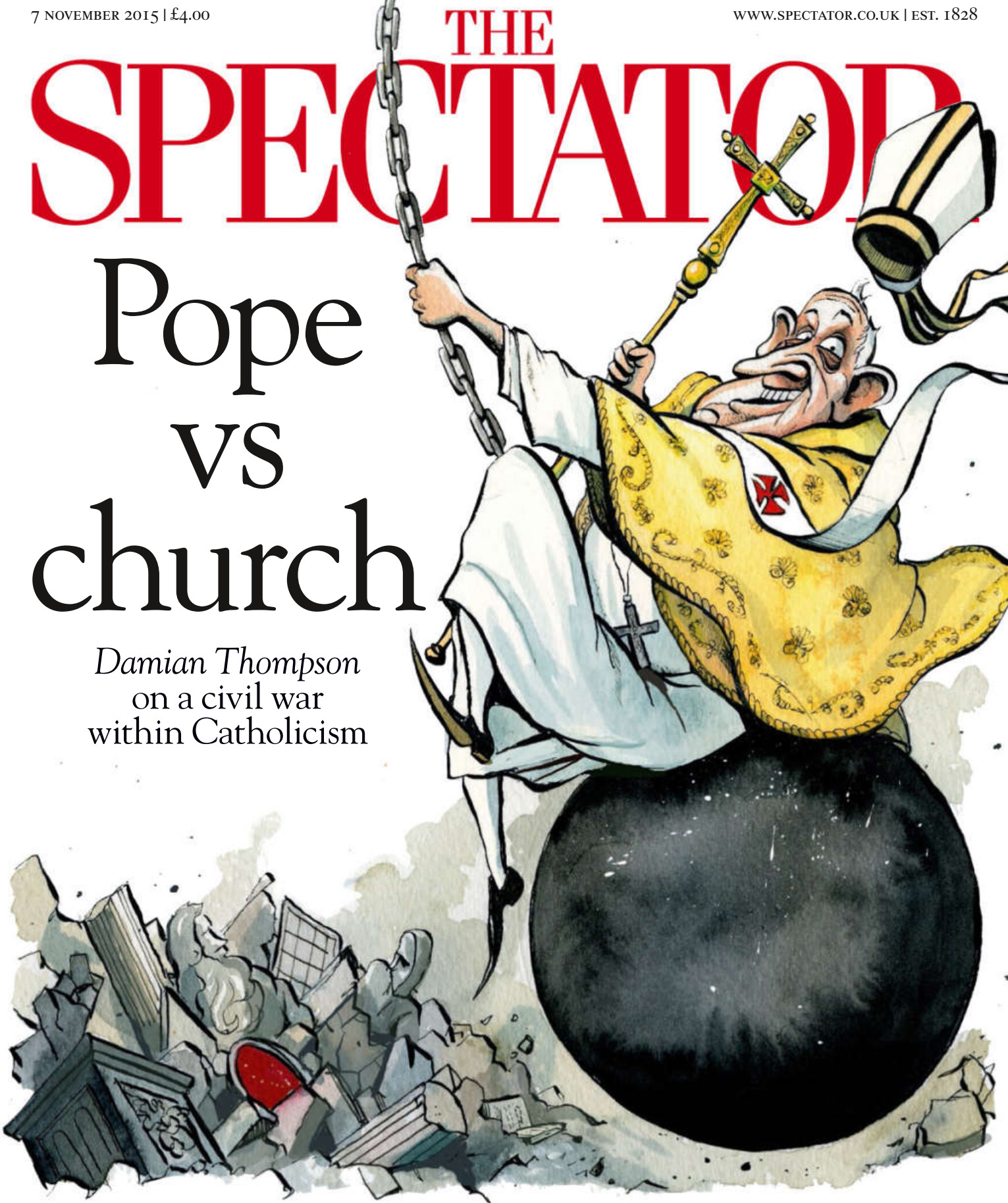


THE SPECTATOR

Pope vs church

*Damian Thompson
on a civil war
within Catholicism*



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Hot air summit

The delegates who will gather for the star-studded Paris climate summit include celebrities, presidents and perhaps even the Pope. Among other things, they will be asked to consider the formation of an 'International Tribunal of Climate Justice', which developed countries would be hauled before for breaching agreed limits on greenhouse gas emissions. That the proposed body will seek to be 'non-punitive, non-adversarial and non-judicial' does not reassure. A tribunal, if it is worthy of the name, ought to be all those things.

Does the threat of climate change really justify such a system? It is disturbing to think how many world leaders and policymakers might casually answer 'yes'. Barack Obama, for example, recently claimed that 'no challenge poses a greater threat to our future and future generations than a change in climate' — seeming momentarily to forget that civilisation has spent the past 65 years never more than a few button-presses away from nuclear annihilation. And in many countries — Britain among them — climate change will actually save lives because fewer pensioners will perish in winter. True, there are risks, as well as benefits, from rising global temperatures. But it takes an extreme reading of data to reach the conclusion that Armageddon is more likely to manifest itself meteorologically than through warfare.

Never has the ability of climate science to project future trends in global temperatures looked so shaky. And yet never have the policymakers who work on international treaties been so determined to use those projections to try to drive measures which could seriously harm the global economy. It is now a quarter of a century since the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its first assessment report; sufficient time to test the predictions it made

then against what has been observed since.

In 1990, the IPCC predicted a rise in global temperatures over the ensuing century of 0.3°C per decade. It put its 'uncertainty range' at 0.2 to 0.5°C of warming per decade. Since then, the rise in global temperatures has been about half of the lower end of this range. This ought to have led to a crisis of confidence in the atmospheric models used in climate science. Instead, the data they spew out is treated with ever-greater reverence.

The draft UN agreement attempts to specify measures that will keep global temperatures no higher than 2°C above 'pre-industrial levels'. There are two things wrong with this. Firstly, global temperatures never did settle at a pre-industrial level: various

The rising carbon emissions are not a sign of western excess, but a side effect of the reduction in world poverty

estimates of global temperatures over the past millennium show temperatures during the 14th century at least 0.5°C higher than during the 18th century. Secondly, it is foolish to imagine that something as chaotic as the world's climate can be controlled like the thermostat on a central heating system — the failure of past predictions ought to remind the UN's draftsmen of that. Their document would deserve more respect if it said that we can't be sure what the climatic effects of carbon emissions will be but we think they ought to be curtailed as a precaution. That would be honest and a reasonable reflection of the uncertainties involved.

There is a parallel danger here: that in attempting to tackle climate change, the world is subjected to lower economic growth than would otherwise be the case. In contrast to the vague threats of climate change, we know with certainty that poverty kills people,

and the sooner we can lift people out of it the better. The rich world's CO₂ emissions have barely changed since the turn of the century. Global levels are rising because countries such as India, China and Brazil are not so poor as before. Far more of their citizens can heat their houses, eat meat and travel more often. This point is often lost in the environmentalist worldview: the rising carbon emissions are not a sign of western excess, but a side effect of the fastest reduction in world poverty that the world has ever known.

Formulating policy on climate change ought to be treated as a trade-off: balancing the climate threat against the risk of economic harm from acting too severely on fossil fuel use. Wealthy countries can cope with severe weather events; poorer ones struggle. Yet there is no sense of this trade-off in the UN document: it treats carbon dioxide emissions as a threat to be eliminated at all costs.

We have witnessed climate summits before. World leaders will stitch up an agreement to cut CO₂ emissions, dress it up in jargon — and will then go away, weigh up their economic interests against the pledges they made and allow themselves some breathing room, despite whatever they said in Paris. Until now, only Britain has been foolish enough to bind itself legally with unilateral CO₂ reduction targets without knowing whether the technology will be available to meet them without damaging the economy. The result is high energy prices, which are driving our industry abroad — and with it, carbon dioxide emissions.

Most countries will act to reduce CO₂ emissions, but not at a rate which puts their prosperity at risk. That is the logical way to approach the problem of climate change. But it is very different from the hyperbole that will dominate discussions in Paris. We must brace ourselves for a gale of hot air.



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CONTRIBUTORS

Damian Thompson is an associate editor of The Spectator, and author of *The Fix* and *Counterknowledge*. His cover story, on Pope Francis, is on p. 14.

Ian Sansom's books include *Paper: an Elegy*, *The Truth about Babies* and two 'County Guides' detective novels, *The Norfolk Mystery* and *Death in Devon*. His lead book review is on p. 38.

Carmen Callil, who reviews Gloria Steinem's memoirs on p. 41, founded the Virago Press in 1973.

Christopher Bray has written biographies of Michael Caine and Sean Connery. He considers the latest crop of books on Frank Sinatra on p. 46.

Sinclair McKay is the author of *The Lost World of Bletchley Park* and *The Secret Listeners*, and looks at two new books about spying on p. 50.

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PORTRAIT OF THE WEEK



Lest we forget

Home

The all-party Foreign Affairs Committee urged David Cameron, the Prime Minister, not to press ahead with a Commons vote on British air strikes against Islamic State positions in Syria. At its conference, Scottish Labour adopted a policy of opposition to Trident renewal, though Kezia Dugdale, its leader, remained in favour, while the Labour party in the United Kingdom as a whole favoured retaining the nuclear deterrent, though its leader, Jeremy Corbyn, opposes it. Britain was smothered in fog, except in Wales, where temperatures on 1 November reached a record 22°C. A man had his ear bitten off in a pub in Aberystwyth on Halloween.

Shaker Aamer, a Saudi citizen and the last British resident to be held in Guantanamo Bay, arrived by air at Biggin Hill, having been detained without trial for 13 years. The government introduced the Investigatory Powers Bill to require communication companies to retain internet browsing histories for the police to inspect, although they would not be able to see the pages viewed without a warrant. Theresa May, the Home Secretary, assured critics. The Commons public accounts committee criticised HM Revenue and Customs for failing to answer half of phone calls. Peter Donaldson, the BBC announcer, died aged 70. Fish (in the form of isinglass) was removed from the recipe for Guinness.

During a visit to Berlin, George Osborne, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, said that countries which do not use the euro

should not be discriminated against and not required to bail out single currency members. The Michelin tyre factory in Ballymena, Co. Antrim, is to close in 2018 with the loss of 860 jobs. Gatwick airport introduced a 'premium passport control' service which for an extra £12.50 offered travellers less delay on arrival. Tom Graveney, who scored 122 first-class centuries, died, aged 88. Colin Welland, PC Graham in *Z Cars*, died, aged 81. Downing Street digitally added a remembrance poppy to a photograph of David Cameron on its Facebook page. The Victoria & Albert museum came under pressure to accept an offer of Lady Thatcher's clothes.

Abroad

A Russian Airbus 321 from Sharm el-Sheikh, bound for St Petersburg, broke up in the air over northern Sinai, killing all 224 on board. President Abdul Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt flew to Britain on a planned visit. As talks began in Vienna on ways of stopping the civil war in Syria, Russia said it was not crucial for President Bashar al-Assad to stay in power, saying it was up to the Syrian people. A Syrian government bombing raid on the Douma district of Damascus killed 40. Salafist militiamen drove Alawite women in cages about on the backs of pickup trucks in Douma as human shields. Ahmed Chalabi, the secular Shia Iraqi politician who helped persuade the United States to invade in 2003, died, aged 71. Kazakhstan replaced the head of its central bank after the national currency, the tenge, had fallen by a third since he allowed it to float in August.

In the second Turkish general election this year, the AK party, founded by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, gained 317 of the 550 seats, enabling it to govern alone but not to hold a referendum on changing the constitution to increase the powers of the president. Turkish police arrested 44 people suspected of having links to Fethullah Gulen, an exiled Islamic cleric accused of seeking to overthrow the government. The UNHCR put the number of migrants who entered Europe by sea in October at 218,394, about the same as for the whole of last year. A group of 114 migrants who landed at a British base in Cyprus caused a series of disturbances, including setting fire to a tent, in their attempts to leave.

President Ma Ying-jeou of Taiwan flew to Singapore to meet his Chinese counterpart, President Xi Jinping. Al-Shabab gunmen used two car bombs to blast their way into the compound of the Sahafi hotel in Mogadishu, the Somali capital, and killed 15 people. Victor Ponta resigned as prime minister of Romania after a fire killed 32 people in a nightclub. Volkswagen said 800,000 of its cars in Europe had been sold with false information about their carbon dioxide emissions. Australia will no longer appoint knights and dames, reintroduced last year, the country's new prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, said. The creator of Candy Crush Saga, King Digital Entertainment, was bought by the American computer game company Activision Blizzard, which produces *Call of Duty*, for £3.8 billion. Amazon opened a shop in Seattle that sells books.

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DIARY

Joan Collins



I had only experienced great loss when my mother died. It was desperately harrowing, but not as harrowing as the news that my sister Jackie had passed away. My mother had suffered a long lingering illness but Jackie only told me about her cancer two weeks before she died. It was a shattering, heart-breaking blow that I still haven't assimilated and I don't know if I ever will really get over it. I expect one learns to live with loss but she remains as vivid in my heart and my mind as if she were still alive. Jackie was a special woman, not because she was my sister but because of her indomitable spirit, amazing energy, generosity, kindness and warmth. To have written five books after being diagnosed with cancer seven and a half years ago was a major achievement, not to mention the journey to London last year to receive her well-deserved OBE, and again in March to celebrate my DBE. Jackie was not just a star, she was an entire galaxy.

I didn't think I would be able to continue with the preparations for my husband's surprise 50th birthday in October, but I threw myself into it, and made sure no one leaked the news. It was as clandestine as if I were having an affair, but it was all worth it when Percy arrived in the private room at Quaglino's to be greeted by 35 family and guests yelling 'Surprise!'

More recently, holed up in bed with the godmother of all colds, surrounded by balled-up tissues and piles of newspapers, I tried not to feel too sorry for myself at missing a couple of fun dinner parties. Percy contracted the same cold at the same time, so we were able to sympathise and rub each other's backs with Vicks, while dosing up on honey and lemon drinks and echinacea pastilles. Whatever you do, the bloody cold is in control, so you just have to suck it up and surf the TV (only to discover endless re-runs of Bruce Willis in multiple *Die Hards*, and *Godfathers 1, 2, 3* etc).

There are so many wonderful movies from the 1940s through to the 1970s and 1980s, but all the networks offer are the same more recent films on repeat. Occasionally there will be a gem, like

Billy Wilder's *Double Indemnity* with the great Barbara Stanwyck. That was aired at 3 a.m. and a large Technicolor bloke in a red shirt took up a third of the black and white screen making hand signals, which I realised was for the hearing-impaired, but it distracted from the suspense. I couldn't get the image of the *Saturday Night Live* sketch — where the broadcaster screams 'AND NOW HERE'S THE NEWS FOR

THE HEARING-IMPAIRED!!' — out of my mind. I'm amazed so many people under the age of 40 haven't heard of most of the great movies, let alone the great movie stars, of the golden age of cinema. Mention Bette Davis, Marlon Brando, Gene Kelly or Fred Astaire and you get blank looks. I probably look just as blank when I skim through celebrity magazines, though I'm beginning to recognise the ones from *Strictly Come Dancing*. Now that's real entertainment and deserves its millions of viewers.

I travelled to the glamorous Grand Hotel du Cap in Antibes to shoot a cameo in the movie of *Absolutely Fabulous*. I was sworn to secrecy by the publicity department, so my lips are sealed about the plot. However, I can say Mesdames Saunders and Lumley looked extremely fetching in their gloriously overdecorated caftans, adorned with plenty of bling. We shot in the pool area, which we had to travel down to by funicular over a steep and rocky incline. I'm somewhat nervous about funiculars. They seem terribly rickety and dangerous, but I arrived safely, played my scene, then retired to a shady spot to observe the two fabulous actresses do a very funny scene. When I was about to make my way back to the hotel, the AD ruefully informed me that the funicular had broken down.

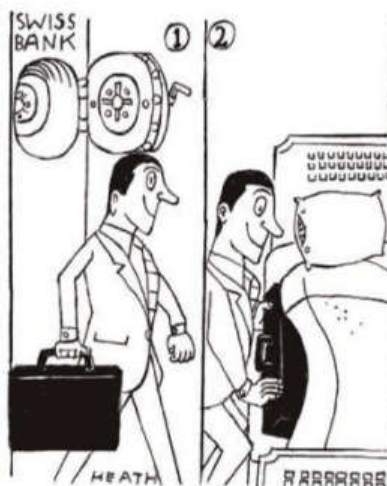
'Oh, I'll walk up then,' I chirped.
'Five hundred steps?' he inquired.
'I'll wait then.'

They brought me lunch. I had mentioned I was allergic to shellfish, but as I pushed the lettuce around, I spotted a tiny shrimp nestled between the leaves. Luckily, the funicular resumed working. Had I partaken of just one little shrimp, I could have gone into anaphylactic shock.

Remarkably, my new novel takes place in the south of France, where not only does a funicular break down but it bursts into flames; and not only are some guests at a party served tainted shellfish, but one woman actually dies from eating it. Is this a case of life imitating art or vice-versa? After all, I wrote it first!

Joan Collins's new novel, *The St Tropez Lonely Hearts Club*, is out now.

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Cameron's Syrian stew

David Cameron doesn't do regret. It is not in his nature to sit and fret about decisions that he has taken and can now do nothing about. But there are still a few things that rankle with him. One of those is the House of Commons' rejection of military action in Syria two years ago.

This defeat was a personal and a political humiliation for Cameron. For months, he had been pushing for action against Assad. President Obama had finally accepted that something must be done following the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons. But then Cameron's own parliament and party stopped him. It sent a message to the world about Cameron, as well as one about Britain and its foreign policy after Iraq.

Downing Street never got over it. In September, George Osborne denounced the decision not to help the rebels fighting Assad as 'one of the worst decisions the House of Commons has ever made'.

The legacy of this vote complicates Syrian matters today. There's the task of hitting Islamic State in north-east Syria, a part of the country out of Assad's control. The military wants to end the absurdity of only hitting the terrorist group on one side of the Iraq-Syria border. Indeed, given that its Iraqi operation is resupplied from its headquarters in Syria, it makes no sense to limit bombing to Iraq.

But No. 10 is reluctant to make it explicit that it is not talking about bombing Assad. This is for two reasons. First of all, Cameron is genuinely revolted by Assad's behaviour. He believes that someone who is willing to drop barrel bombs on his own people can't be the answer to the question of what to do about Syria. Secondly, Downing Street doesn't want to lose face or draw attention to how much its position has changed since 2013.

Since May, the government has been keen to target Islamic State in Syria. But three things held up seeking parliamentary approval. First, the Tories didn't want the vote to get caught up the Labour leadership contest, and so decided to hold off until the new leader was in place. When, to their surprise, that new leader was Jeremy Corbyn, it scuppered any prospect of the 'consensus' on military action that Cameron is so keen on — his guarantee that he won't lose in the Commons again on a matter of war and peace. Even after Corbyn's victory, the Tory vote-counters thought they were making progress. They were whittling down the number of Tory rebels and gaining

cast-iron assurances from Labour MPs that they would back military action.

But then came Moscow's decision to deploy major forces to Syria. This, worryingly, took the government by surprise. It's another example of the UK's dire lack of intelligence about Russian military action (the seizure of Crimea was not anticipated either). Russian involvement in Syria has hugely complicated efforts to stitch together a Commons majority for bombing in Syria.

Inside government, though, they maintain that they are still trying to build a Commons

There is now a strand of Tory thinking that believes Western intervention does more harm than good

coalition in favour of action. One of those involved tells me irritably: 'A majority is not there at the moment, or we would have a vote by now.'

In fact, a vote is still so far away that there has been no discussion with the whips about the precise wording of any motion. There is also a fear that those Labour MPs who say they are prepared to back it may not be so solid. One of those tasked with courting them says: 'You have to be able to look them in the eyes and definitely know they will be with you on the night.' There is a fear that this support could slip away if the question becomes too party political.

A further complicating factor is the American attitude. Washington, in an act of

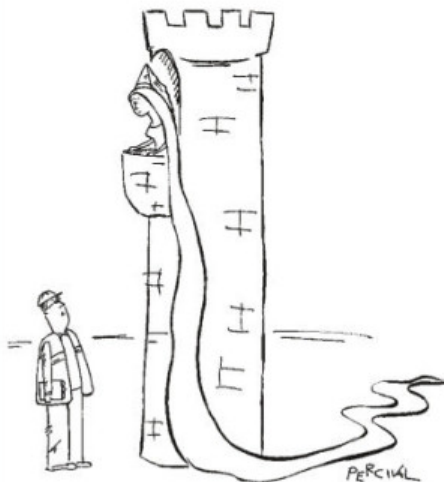
cynicism that has shocked even hard-bitten realists, want to let the Russians stew a bit in Syria. The US is urging an 'exercise in strategic patience' to see how deep a hole the Russians will dig for themselves there. Obama is seemingly happy to see Russia dragged in deeper and deeper on the basis that Vladimir Putin will ultimately have to make a humiliating retreat from backing Assad. The US view is summed up to me as: 'The Russians have bitten off more than they can chew; it's more like Afghanistan than anything else.'

President Obama is not an easy ally to have. He has no grand strategy, his approach is hard to read and he tends not to return calls at crucial times. One senior government figure says his foreign policy is characterised by 'indifference and retreat'.

But whatever gripes Whitehall might have about Washington, one fact can't be avoided: the consensus in Britain about foreign policy has broken down. Labour, still in trauma about the Iraq war, is now a non-interventionist party. When asked during the leadership election, Corbyn couldn't think of a circumstance in which he would deploy British forces abroad. This makes it very hard to see how the Corbyn-led Labour party would ever support a parliamentary motion approving the use of force. So any such Commons vote will be extremely tight.

The anti-interventionist mood extends beyond the Labour party. After all, if Corbyn and Labour were the only bar to bombing in Syria, Cameron could simply use the Tories' parliamentary majority to gain approval for it. There is now, though, a strand of Tory thinking that believes western intervention in the Middle East does more harm than good and that the area is best left alone. This bloc of opinion, combined with Labour's anti-interventionist position, will make it very hard for any Prime Minister without a thumping majority to win parliamentary approval for the use of force in that part of the world.

Tony Blair offered the Commons a vote before British forces entered Iraq in 2003 as part of his effort to persuade MPs to back the invasion. But the legacy of that decision and the war itself is that no British Prime Minister will ever again have the freedom of action that he once had in matters of war and peace.



'Do you have planning permission for that extension?'

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THE SPECTATOR'S NOTES

Charles Moore

It is good to learn that the current management of the V&A want to reverse their predecessors' lack of interest in Margaret Thatcher's clothes. The museum's original refusal showed a lack of imagination about how women have tried to gain greater power in a man's world, and how clothes tell this story. Museums love to have suits of medieval armour. They reveal the amazing combination of defensive utility and elegant display which the age required. Even better if the armour was worn by a great warrior on a great occasion, like the Black Prince at Crecy. Mrs Thatcher's clothes were her armour on her fields of battle — in Parliament, on television, in Moscow, at her party conference after the Brighton bomb. They helped her win. I hope a generous donor will step forward to buy them for the nation at this late stage. If the V&A doesn't take them, the clothes would look well in the Imperial War Museum.

In political reality, George Osborne must be right that member states not in the eurozone cannot prevent those who are from integrating further. But the trouble with his 'We want to help you do what you want, so long as you protect our position outside the zone' offer is that the further integration will be a disaster across the entire Continent. It sounds logical to say that the travails of Greece etc. have proved the need for banking union, fiscal integration and so on, but in fact the development of a de facto central government for the zone would pile Pelion on Ossa, forcing Germany, who would have to pay, to create a form of imperium over it. Obviously Britain is better out than in, but the greater need is to stop trying to repair and extend the house that Jacques Delors built, and arrange for its orderly demolition.

In last week's Notes, I wrote about the controversy caused by the government's revision of the ministerial code which guides ministers' conduct. In its Blair-era version, the code said that ministers had an overarching duty 'to comply with the law including international law and treaty obligations'. The Cameron-era version has deleted



the last six words, leaving simply '... to comply with the law'. This has outraged lawyers who work in this field, but what the change exposes is that international law and treaties should never have been slipped into the rubric in the first place. According to the great legal philosopher Professor John Finnis, in a blog for Policy Exchange's Judicial Power project, 'The most fundamental principle of our constitutional law ... is that ministers can neither claim any immunity ... from the rules of common law, nor ... impose a legal duty ... except to the extent that an Act of Parliament authorises them to do so.' So it is wrong to say that, simply by entering into an international treaty, ministers can change the legal rights and obligations of citizens or of future ministers. International law is defective, compared with national law, because it has no accepted final court. It derives from no state and is therefore, in a certain sense, a fiction — though often a useful one. It is positively bad for ministers to follow international law and treaties if they conflict with their constitutional duties in the country which they govern. In modern culture, where the rule of law has been subjected to 'producer capture' by lawyers, it is brave of the government to clear this up.

Elsewhere in this paper this week, Peter Hitchens defends the once-famous, once-sainted Bishop Bell of Chichester from the Church of England's claim that he was guilty of child abuse. I do not know the facts of this case, but if Hitchens is right, the Bell case is yet another example of people's readiness to say untrue things about the dead, secure in the knowledge that the libel law cannot go after them. Naturally, I am not arguing for the law to extend to the dead (think of the furious suits in support of the prophet Mohammed which would

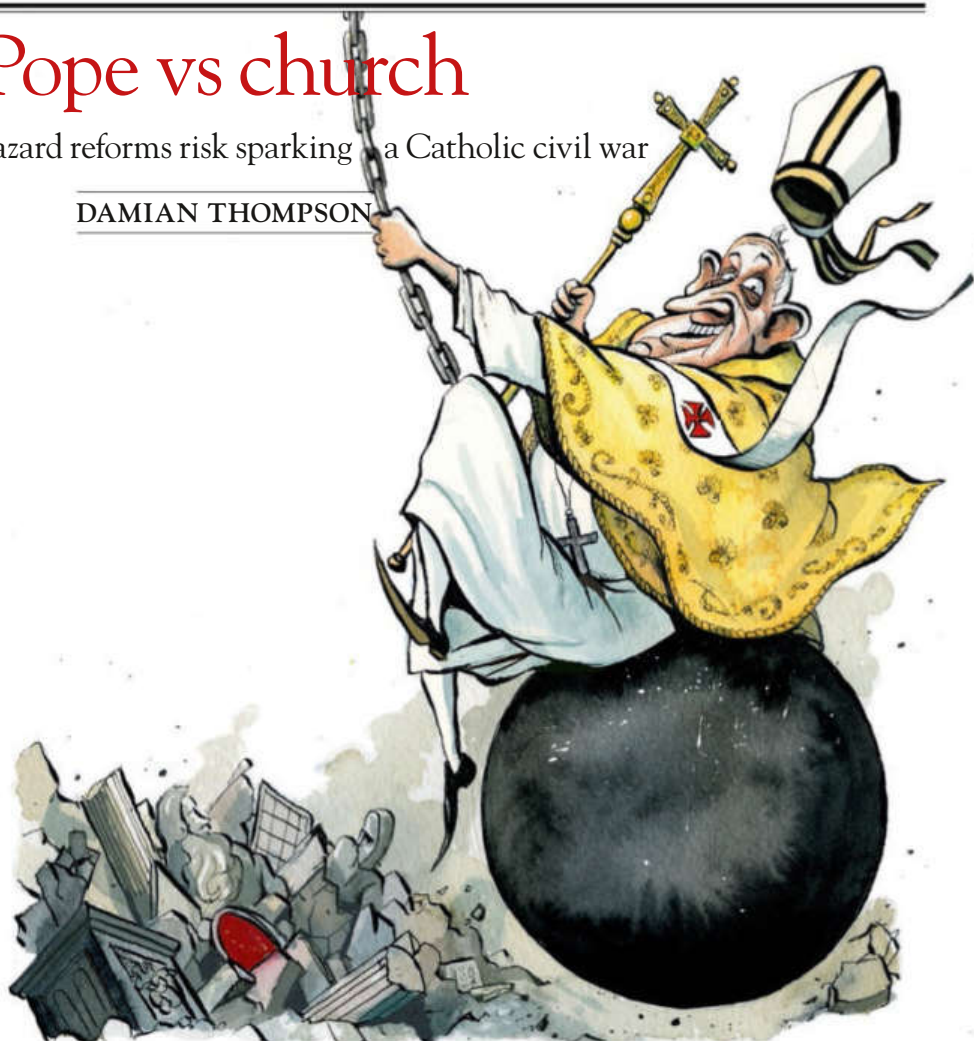
ensue), but all the more reason for the living to defend the reputation of the departed. This is why I am pursuing the claim by Professor Sir Geoff Palmer that in 1964, at an interview for a MSc course subsidised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Sir Keith Joseph told him to go home and grow bananas. The Centre for Policy Studies, which Joseph founded, has now complained to the BBC about the programme — *The Life Scientific* — on which Sir Geoff made the claim unchallenged. Sir Geoff might reflect that his account of what Joseph said would, if Sir Keith were alive, require the legal defence of 'justification' (i.e. provable truth) to avoid losing a libel action. As a learned scientist with a regard for evidence, Sir Geoff surely feels a moral though not a legal duty to produce his. He might also consider the view of Sir Michael Franklin, at that time private secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and later the ministry's permanent secretary. Sir Michael describes the story about Joseph as 'extraordinary', and says succinctly, 'Palmer must have got the wrong man'.

It is well known that, as years pass, one fails to recognise people because they look so much older than when one last saw them. Nowadays, however, the opposite is often true. Several times recently, I have stared blankly when greeted warmly by elegant-looking women (and, occasionally, men) because they now look so much younger. Closer inspection usually reveals evidence of the work done to achieve this, and the effect then becomes less convincing; but it can only be a matter of time before surgical and other procedures are so accomplished that the illusion will be complete. Eventually people will realise that if cosmetics can achieve virtually anything, it is vanity to try to reproduce one's young self as one ages, and one might as well get a new face altogether. The danger, of course, would be that more than one person would decide to be reworked as Marilyn Monroe or Cary Grant (or whoever). The effect at parties would then be the same as the problem when two women turn up wearing the same dress.

Pope vs church

Francis's haphazard reforms risk sparking a Catholic civil war

DAMIAN THOMPSON



Last Sunday, the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* carried an article by Eugenio Scalfari, one of the country's most celebrated journalists, in which he claimed that Pope Francis had just told him that 'at the end of faster or slower paths, all the divorced who ask [to receive Holy Communion] will be admitted'.

Catholic opinion was stunned. The Pope had just presided over a three-week synod of bishops at the Vatican that was sharply divided over whether to allow divorced and remarried Catholics to receive the sacrament. In the end, it voted to say nothing much.

On Monday, the Pope's spokesman, Father Federico Lombardi, said Scalfari's report was 'in no way reliable' and 'cannot be considered the Pope's thinking'.

Fair enough, you may think. Scalfari is 91 years old. Also, he doesn't take notes during his interviews or use a tape recorder. Of course he's not 'reliable'.

But that didn't satisfy the media. They pointed out that the Pope knew exactly what he was letting himself in for. This is the fourth time he has chosen to give an interview to a man who relies on his nonagenarian memory. In their last encounter, Scalfari quoted the Pope as saying that two per cent of Catholic priests were paedophiles, including bishops and cardinals. Poor Lombardi had to clean up after that one, too. Last time round, Catholics gave Francis the benefit of the doubt. This time many of them are saying: never mind Scalfari, how can you trust what the Pope says?

We're two and a half years into this pontificate. But it's only in the past month that ordinary conservative Catholics, as opposed to hardline traditionalists, have started saying that Pope Francis is out of control.

Out of control, note. Not 'losing control', which isn't such a big deal. No pontiff in living memory has awakened the specific fear now spreading around the church: that the magisterium, the teaching authority vested in Peter by Jesus, is not safe in his hands.

The non-Catholic media have yet to grasp the deadly nature of the crisis facing the Argentinian Pope. They can see that his public style is relaxed and adventurous; they conclude from his off-the-cuff remarks that he is liberal (by papal standards) on sensitive issues of sexual morality, and regards hard-hearted conservative bishops as hypocrites.

All of which is true. But journalists — and

the Pope's millions of secular fans — get one thing badly wrong. They assume, from his approachable manner and preference for the modest title 'Bishop of Rome', that Jorge Bergoglio wears the office of Supreme Pontiff lightly.

As anyone who works in the Vatican will tell you, this is not the case. Francis exercises power with a self-confidence worthy of St John Paul II, the Polish pope whose holy

The successor of Peter is acting like a politician, picking fights and tantalising the public with soundbites

war against communism ended in the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

But that's where the similarities end. John Paul never hid the nature of his mission. He was determined to clarify and consolidate the teachings of the church. Francis, by contrast, wants to move towards a more compassionate, less rule-bound church. But he refuses to say how far he is prepared to go. At times he resembles a motorist driving at full speed without a map or a rear-view mirror. And when the car stalls, as it did at the October synod on the family, he does a Basil Fawlty and thrashes the bonnet with a stick.

Non-Catholics were far more interested

in Francis's 'historic' pronouncements on climate change than they were in the synod, which was dominated by wrangling over the eligibility of divorced and remarried Catholics to receive communion.

That gets things the wrong way round. The Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si'* gave a temporary boost to climate activists. It was the conference on the family that was historic, but not in a good way. During the synod, ordinary devout Catholics began to wonder if Francis's judgment had deserted him — or whether he'd always been a far stranger man than his carefree public image suggested.

In church circles the worries began in October last year, when the Pope staged an 'extraordinary' preparatory synod that fell apart in front of his eyes. Halfway through the gathering, the organisers — hand-picked by Francis — announced that it favoured lifting the communion ban and wanted to recognise the positive aspects of gay relationships.

Cue media rejoicing, until it emerged that the organisers were talking rubbish. The synod bishops, who included senior cardinals, didn't favour either course. Cardinal George Pell, the Australian conservative who serves as the Pope's chancellor of the exchequer, hit the roof — and when Pell is angry you really know about it. The final vote ditched both

proposals. Francis, however, demanded that this year's synod should revisit the question of communion for the divorced.

This first synod wasn't just humiliating for the Pope; it was also weird. Why did Francis let his lieutenants, Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri and Archbishop Bruno Forte, arrange a briefing that basically told lies?

Any other pontiff would have sent Baldisseri and Forte to parishes in Antarctica after screwing up so badly. Instead, to general amazement, the Pope invited them to take charge of the main synod last month. Also invited back was Cardinal Walter Kasper, an 82-year-old ultra-liberal German theologian who wants to sweep away all obstacles to remarried divorcees receiving communion.

To cut a long story short, Francis made it clear that he agreed with Kasper. Yet he also knew that most bishops at this year's synod wanted to uphold the communion ban. So why did he insist that they debate the subject, given that they were never going to vote his way?

Senior cardinals were baffled — and angry that a synod on the worldwide crisis in family life would be dominated by squabbling on this one issue. A week before it started, 13 cardinals led by Pell wrote a letter to the Pope asking him not to let this happen — and also voicing their suspicion that the synod proceedings had been rigged in order to give maximum prominence to the minority Kasperite view.

As expected, the synod quickly threw Kasper's scheme into the wastepaper basket — but that still left open the possibility of some change, because in the months before the synod started Francis had altered its balance by inviting extra bishops who shared his liberal views.

This brings us to a disturbing detail that has seriously undermined confidence in Francis. Among these personal invitees was the very liberal Belgian cardinal Godfried Danneels, who five years ago retired in disgrace when he was tape-recorded telling a man to keep quiet about being abused by a bishop until the latter had retired.

The bishop was the victim's uncle. In other words, Danneels tried to cover up sex abuse within a family. Pope Francis knew this — but still decided to give him a place of honour at a synod on family life.

Why, for God's sake? 'To thank him for votes in the conclave,' said conservatives — a smear, perhaps, but it didn't help that Danneels had just been boasting that he'd helped get Bergoglio elected.

The synod ended messily, with a document that may or may not allow the lifting of the communion ban in special circumstances. Both sides thought they'd won — and then the Pope, in the words of one observer, 'basically threw a strop'.

In his final address, Francis raged against 'closed hearts that hide behind the church's

En Retrait

Since I decided to accept this
quiet corner of the garden
as my undeserved Elysium
and to make the birdsong and the flowers
stand for the rightness of everything,
I find I have no need to show
how many pieces the world is in,
how better and worse it always is;
where motivated reason and
unreason lead and where the next
fall and salvation's coming from.

No remorse, the last hurrah
of influence, survives this light,
constant and evenly-spread, from lawn
and bush, towards the open fields.

—Ian Harrow

teachings' and 'blinkered viewpoints', adding that 'the true defenders of doctrine are not those who uphold its letter but its spirit'.

The implication was clear. Clergy who wholeheartedly supported the communion ban were Pharisees to Francis's Jesus. The Pope was sending coded insults to at least half the world's bishops — and also, it seemed, giving priests permission to question teaching on communion and divorce.

One priest close to the Vatican was appalled but not surprised. 'You're seeing the real Francis,' he said. 'He's a scold. He can't hide his contempt for his own Curia. Also, unlike Benedict, this guy rewards his mates and punishes his enemies.'

Clergy don't normally refer to the Holy Father as 'this guy', even if they dislike his

theology. But right now that's one of the milder conservative descriptions of Francis; others aren't printable in a family magazine.

Never before has the Catholic church looked so much like the Anglican Communion — which broke up because orthodox believers, especially in Africa, believed that their bishops had abandoned the teachings of Jesus.

In the case of Catholicism, the looming crisis is on a vastly bigger scale. For millions of Catholics, the great strength of the church is its certainty, coherence and immutability. They look to the Vicar of Christ on earth to preserve that stability. If successive popes come across as lofty and distant figures, that's because they need to, in order to ward off schism in a global church that has roots in so many different cultures.

Now, suddenly, the successor of Peter is acting like a politician, picking fights with opponents, tantalising the public with soundbites and ringing up journalists with startling quotes that his press officer can safely retract. He is even hinting that he disagrees with the teachings of his own church.

A pope cannot behave like this without changing the very nature of that church. Perhaps that is what Francis intended; we can only guess, because he has yet to articulate a coherent programme of change and it's not clear that he is intellectually equipped to do so.

Loyal Catholics believe that the office of Peter will survive irrespective of who holds it; Jesus promised as much. But after the chaos of the last month, their faith is being tested to breaking point. It's beginning to look as if Jorge Bergoglio is the man who inherited the papacy and then broke it.

FROM THE ARCHIVE

The fall of a king

From 'News of the week', The Spectator, 6 November 1915: We greatly regret to record a serious accident to the King. When His Majesty was reviewing troops of the First Army on the Western front the cheers of the men startled the mare he was riding. She reared up so far that, she fell and partly rolled on the King. His Majesty was at once taken away in a motor-car, and though he bravely tried to respond to the recognition of his troops as he passed, it was evident that he was in very great pain. As soon as possible the King was conveyed home. Thus in a wholly unforeseen manner the King has suffered like any of his soldiers from the risks of the campaign.

Family business

Justin Trudeau, son of Pierre Trudeau, was elected to his father's old job as Prime Minister of Canada. Other descendants of former leaders currently in power:

— The maternal grandfather of Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, held the same job between 1957 and 1960.

— Park Geun-hye, president of South Korea, is daughter of Park Chung-hee, president between 1963 and 1979.

— Benigno Aquino III, president of the Philippines, is son of Corazon Aquino, president between 1986 and 1992.

— Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, is daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Prime Minister 1972 to 1975.

Safety drive

Does the public expect driverless cars to make the roads safer? Respondents were asked: how likely is it that there will be fewer crashes with self-driving technology?

US		UK
26%	Very likely	24%
42%	Somewhat likely	48%
22%	Somewhat unlikely	22%
10%	Very unlikely	7.2%

Source: University of Michigan

Typical sins

Conservative MP James Cleverly admitted on a radio broadcast to watching online porn and smoking marijuana, the latter at university. Does this make him typical?

31% of adults say they have taken an illegal drug at some point in their lives, according to the British drugs survey.

56% say they have viewed porn on the internet, according to an Opinion poll.

Laundry list

The V&A may take a collection of clothes worn by Mrs Thatcher, while other items of hers are now being auctioned. Some of the most expensive clothes to have been sold (and which suggest the market for celebrity clothing may have peaked four years ago):

\$4.6m (£2.8m): Ivory rayon-acetate dress worn by Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven-Year Itch*, auctioned 2011.

\$3.7m (£2.2m): Frilly white dress designed by Cecil Beaton and worn by Audrey Hepburn in *My Fair Lady*, auctioned 2011.

\$1.8m (£1.1m): Jacket worn by Michael Jackson in *Thriller* video, auctioned 2011.

43m rupees (£448,000): suit worn by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, auctioned February 2015.

£78,000: see-through dress worn by Kate Middleton during student fashion show at St Andrew's University, reported to have caused Prince William to remark to a friend, 'Kate's hot.'

Who isn't genderfluid?

Sex has always been less binary than it looks
— but we've never been this boring about it

MELANIE McDONAGH

Even yew trees are at it. It seems the ancient Fortingall Yew in Perthshire, which everyone had assumed to be male, is bearing berries and is therefore, at least in part, female. Dr Max Coleman of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, observed: 'The rest of the tree was clearly male. One small branch in the outer part of the crown has switched and now behaves as female.' Which makes this not just the oldest but the most socially progressive tree in Britain, the Caitlyn Jenner of topiary. Or perhaps it was just one transgressive branch making a bid for attention, having been trapped in the wrong trunk all this time.

You can't go far this year without encountering someone in the process of transitioning between genders or who has already arrived at their gender of choice. As a woman supervising a drama group for trans actors put it on BBC Radio 4 last Sunday, 'There's a moment happening.' And if you're not easy with the whole genderqueer approach to the boys and girls question, if you're stuck in the binary (bad) view that your gender is a matter of XX or XY chromosomes or the possession of something as obvious as a penis, well, you're going to have to catch up fast and learn how to pronounce Mx — the non-binary alternative to Mr, Miss, Mrs or Ms. One could only applaud the blind man on last week's radio programme for the visually impaired, *In Touch*, who confessed to panicking at a diversity training workshop because he wasn't sure whether one of the contributors was male or female — the voice register was plainly male, but that was no guide. With admirable tact, he leaned over and asked what pronoun the speaker preferred; it turned out to be 'she'.

The trend isn't without its comic elements, as with the *Guardian's* cookery writer Jack Monroe, who was presented with a 'Woman of the Future' award last week although she had just come out as transgender, as opposed to merely butch lesbian. 'To reject that award would have been disingenuous,' she wrote in the paper. 'I am the same person I was when Sandi Toksvig gave me a Woman of the Year award in 2014. Should I reject that too?'

Mind you, Monroe has a point. She goes on to write: 'Why do we segregate awards by gender anyway? Or children's clothing? Aren't we all a bit "non-binary" inside?'

You know, if the whole trans thing wasn't so tiresomely political and self-important and focused on the physical — lopping your bits off or having prosthetic ones added at public expense, or stuffing yourself full of opposite-sex hormones — I think I'd be right with her there. Especially on the preposterous awards-for-women industry, which serves only to emphasise the extent to which the sexes aren't level-pegging and which confers its accolades on those, like Mx Monroe or Ms Toksvig, of whom the political class approves.

My views are regressively biological; if you've got those two XX or XY chromosomes, you're a girl or a boy. But when it comes to the attributes normally assigned to the opposite sex, I think many of us are a little genderfluid. Indeed lots of people have been in previous generations without going on about it. Marlene Dietrich was, you might say, genderfluid, but she'd have given the contemporary category very short shrift. Old-fashioned dandies were in touch with their feminine side, but just dressed the part.

As a student I liked exams and loathed continuous assessment. I enjoy Latin. I have rows about politics when women are meant to be consensual — I'm with Nicola Sturgeon there, who has little time for that notion. I love P.G. Wodehouse, and apparently women don't.

My daughter is only eight but she's pleasingly non-binary too. She did a little autobiographical note for school in which she was asked to categorise herself. She duly drew up four categories, boy, tomboy, girl, tomgirl, and put herself in the tomboy category. She doesn't have time for what she calls girly girls, which means she's eschewed — hurrah! — all the really toxic stuff to do with princesses, My Little Pony and the more horrible versions of the colour pink. She has to be bribed into dresses. But it doesn't mean to say she's what my mother would call peculiar; she has a crush on Alfred Noyes's highwayman, as in the poem, and thinks gay marriage is funny.

The thing about the new political take on gender is that it's nothing new. Sex has never been really binary but we've never been this boring about it. I'm not trans, thanks, but I don't fancy the pink/blue dichotomy either. Just call me mauve.

Dot Wordsworth on being cisgender, p. 78.



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Moctar, Mars Sustainability Manager, West Africa

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Raising The Bar

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Why can't we get our minds around ME?



Do you ever wake up worried that you have tiny fibres growing beneath your skin, all along your spinal column? Possibly wriggling little fibres, placed there by the government or by aliens? By aliens I don't mean asylum seekers but proper aliens, quite probably creatures with bifurcated tongues and scaly lips from the Planet Zog. If so, you may well consider yourself to be suffering from 'Morgellons'.

This unfortunate condition had its heyday at the turn of the century, with hundreds of thousands of people reporting to their GPs and clinics in the USA and here, pleading to have these little fibres sorted out somehow. Millions and millions of dollars were spent investigating the medical causes of the supposed disease, which also had symptoms of lethargy, torpor, inability to sleep, aching joints and limbs, pain — remember these symptoms, please, they will come in handy later on in this article. Another symptom was a blind fury on the part of sufferers at any suggestion that their illness could be in any way psychiatric in origin. It was other stuff, mysterious stuff, some of which I mentioned above, but also maybe viruses or pollution or weird electro-magnetic business. And there was a conspiracy on the part of doctors and politicians and journalists to cover it all up.

I remembered the fury with which Morgellons sufferers — and one way or another those people *were* suffering, remember — prosecuted their case when I wrote a short blog about another illness with a somewhat ectoplasmic pathology — ME, or chronic fatigue syndrome, or yuppie flu (call it what you want). The same blind fury. I copped it rather less than the experts who have investigated this condition and come to the conclusion that it too has a significant psychiatric component, a point of view generally shared by the medical profession (even if they are sometimes a little reluctant to come out and say it, for understandable reasons). The principal British researcher, Professor Simon Wessely at King's College London's Institute of Psychiatry, held that ME was almost certainly a psychiatric condition — and that was when the death threats started.

So much splenetic odium, so much hatred — aimed at a man who had wanted to help sufferers. He gave up, and so did his research-

er Professor Myra McClure, driven out by the loathing. Major symptoms of ME? Lethargy, torpor, inability to sleep, aching joints and limbs, pain. No discoverable medical cause. No discernible medical cure. Given the intense activity of some ME sufferers, the poisonous emails, the threats, the rage, two things occurred to me. First, that their lethargy and torpor was clearly in remission. And second: that if, as most of the medical community believes, ME had a psychiatric basis, then ME was the least of their problems.

Wessely mused, perplexed, that these people would far rather their illness had an

The problems seem to me to be a consequence of our primitive approach to psychiatric illness

untreatable viral cause than a psychiatric basis which might easily be treatable. Why would they want that? The ME lobby instead put their faith in a research programme at Columbia University in New York which investigated links between ME and the very nasty, distantly HIV-related viruses XMRV and P-MLV. But the researchers concluded that there was no link. More recently another study has suggested that the symptoms of ME might be alleviated by cognitive behavioural therapy and a bit of exercise. Hence my blog.

And then there is fibromyalgia. These multifarious and deeply mysterious ailments of the advanced capitalist world! (There are no sufferers of ME or fibromyalgia or morgellons in, say, Chad.) Each with its own hastily

bolted-on historicity, although in truth they were all unknown 40 years ago. Fibromyalgia's major symptoms: aching joints, lethargy, torpor, inability to sleep, pain. Affects, according to its support group, one in 25 of the UK population — that's 2.6 million people. And none in, say, Burkina Faso, so far as we know.

Of course, new illnesses occur. And of course we learn more about medical conditions which in the past we might have dismissed through ignorance. But the problems we have in dealing with ME and fibromyalgia seem to me to be a consequence of our primitive approach, collectively, to psychiatric illness. The stigma of mental illness — and the prejudice that if it's rooted somewhere in the mind, it can't be 'real'. But of course it is real, every bit as real as if it were occasioned by a virus, or by aliens. These people — all of them — suffer, and perhaps the ones who shriek the loudest when told that their condition is primarily psychiatric are suffering most of all.

I say primarily psychiatric, but there is no Manichean division between body and mind; they are one and the same. I speak as someone who has suffered panic attacks, which can be terrifying. The manner in which the body brilliantly mimics a heart attack when these occasions occur is an immediate riposte to those who say that this stuff isn't 'real'. It takes hard work and concentration to keep the attacks at bay, plus exercise. One day I will die of a heart attack having assumed that it is simply another panic attack — come on, Rod, breathe deeply and focus on something nice, such as Caroline Flint addressing the Labour conference with those cold dead eyes of hers. Hell, it won't be a bad way to go.

But I do wonder about the propensity of our lifestyle here in the affluent but relentlessly striving West to conjure up these undeniably debilitating ailments; add ME and fibromyalgia and panic attacks to stress and depression — that's an enormous number of people, unhappy and averse. And clearly in some way hurting.

Morgellons is now consigned to the file marked 'delusional parasitism', although there is still a research programme in operation at the University of Oklahoma, under the guidance of a man called Dr Randy Wymore. Keep checking for those tiny wriggling fibres, then.



'Buy anything at the Thatcher memorabilia auction?'

Rude awakening

Having seen Prince Philip's brisk manner in person, I finally understand his brilliant conversational strategy

HARRY MOUNT

I've just been on the receiving end of a Prince Philip gaffe, of sorts, and I loved it. It was at a lunch last week at the Cavalry and Guards Club for the Gallipoli Association — the charity that commemorates victims and veterans of that tragic, doomed campaign.

For 40 years, the Duke of Edinburgh has been the association's patron. And so, in Gallipoli's centenary year, he came to the association's lunch. Before lunch, he roamed at will around the cavernous drawing room, chatting to association members.

As he approached me, he held his drink in his right hand, meaning I couldn't shake it, and launched straight into conversation. It meant I had little opportunity to bow and call him 'Your Royal Highness' — as I would have done in an instant. I got the distinct impression he didn't want much bowing and scraping.

'Who roped you into this?' the prince said. It was the first intimation of his supposedly brusque manner. In fact, it was conspiratorial, teasing and jokey. He knew I hadn't been roped into lunch; I knew he knew. That faint blast of humour made it much easier to explain how I had in fact roped myself into the Gallipoli Association.

I told him how my great-grandfather, Thomas Longford, had been killed at Gallipoli on 21 August 1915. His last words to his second-in-command, crouching down to avoid the hail of shells overhead, were, 'Please don't duck, Fred. It won't help you and it's no good for the men's morale.'

Moments later, marching at the head of his Yeomanry Brigade troops, with a map in one hand and his walking stick in the other, Longford was cut down by heavy rifle fire. 'Fred' — Fred Cripps, brother of Sir Stafford, the future chancellor — lived on for 60 years.

I fear I've told the story many times before. And I went on to tell Prince Philip how I'd also told the story to Prince Harry in April — when we were both at Gallipoli for the centenary commemorations of the allied landings.

I had asked Prince Harry, 'What's the protocol on ducking these days in the army?'

'You're allowed to duck,' he had replied,

smiling. 'But there's a strict protocol against running away.'

Still not tiring of my theme, I asked Prince Philip if he was allowed to duck in the navy during the war.

'What a silly thing to do!' he said. 'Not much point in ducking on a ship.'

And with that, he was off, in search of Gallipoli Association members with less idiotic questions to ask.

Afterwards, I could easily have presented the whole thing as a classic Prince Philip gaffe: the aggressive prince ticking off the descendant of a first world war soldier. But he was right — it was a silly question. And his answer wasn't just honest; it was very

These gaffes magically choke off the soul-destroying small talk that must be the bane of every royal's life

funny. I cracked up; he kept a straight face. But he certainly meant to get a laugh. Prince Philip is the Paul Merton of the royal family — the straight man with the funny lines.

I suddenly realised what all those supposed Prince Philip gaffes over the years were. Gaffe is the wrong word. They are in fact jokes — jokes that follow almost precisely the same formula: a mixture of conspiratorial banter, mock teasing and stage rudeness. They are that much funnier because of who he is — a 94-year-old Greek prince, war hero and husband of the most famous woman in the world. You're prepared for seriousness and diplomatic discre-



'This is Geoff. He's a bit of an unreconstructed old lefty.'

tion from that sort of man; when you get the reverse, it's that much funnier.

When he was asked in 1967 whether he'd like to visit the Soviet Union, he said, 'I would like to go to Russia very much, although the bastards murdered half my family.' That's funny because the first half of the sentence is in opposition to the second. It's also funny because you don't expect uncomfortable truths from the great and the good.

Except with Prince Philip. As well as playing against type, he is also playing along with type. He knows his reputation and he knows his one-liners are likely to be reported by scoundrels like me. And yet he goes on delivering the material, knowing the punters lap it up.

Prince Philip shares with Boris Johnson what my friend Stephen Robinson, former comment editor of the *Telegraph*, identified as 'a presumption of hilarity'. As Prince Philip approached me, I longed for him to be outspoken and funny. What a delight when the expectation was satisfied.

It's striking that most people on the receiving end of a Prince Philip gaffe also find it funny. This July, he visited Chadwell Heath Community Centre in Romford, and asked a charity trustee, 'Who do you sponge off?' The trustee fell about laughing and later said Prince Philip had just been teasing her.

There's a world of difference between affectionate teasing and malicious teasing. Having seen the Prince Philip act in the flesh, I can see it's always affectionate teasing — even if it looks more direct, or even rude, on the page. Like most gags, his are better if you are there at the time.


I wasn't in Cardiff in 1999, when he told children from the British Deaf Association, standing next to a Caribbean steel band, 'If you're near that music, it's no wonder you're deaf.' But I bet it was aimed at making them laugh, not at humiliating them.

The same goes for the most celebrated gaffe of all — his comment in 1986 to British students in Xian, China: 'If you stay here much longer, you'll all be slitty-eyed.' OK — that sort of language is no longer acceptable. But the point wasn't that he was trying to offend the British students; he was trying to make them laugh.

On 20 November, Prince Philip will have been married to the Queen for 68 years. That's 68 years of dealing with thousands — no, millions — of nervy, sycophantic strangers like me. Gaffes are a brilliant way to make those meetings easier for both sides. They aren't just funny; they don't just put people at their ease. They also magically choke off the soul-destroying small talk that must be the bane of every royal's life. The Prince Philip gaffe is the quickfire shortcut to a proper conversation — to talking on the same level. It is the ultimate royal ice-breaker.

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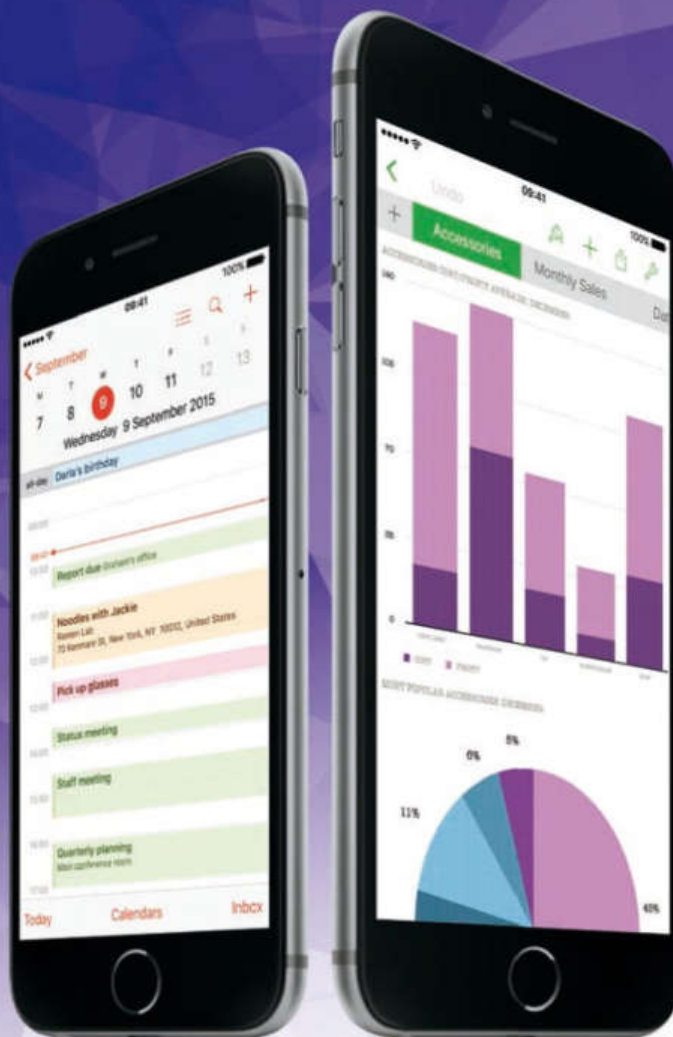
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An indefensible truth

Our armed forces have been cut too far to fight a meaningful war
– and the coming defence review looks unlikely to change that

CON COUGHLIN

This Sunday, David Cameron will lay a wreath at the Cenotaph to commemorate those who made the ultimate sacrifice during two ruinous world wars. People will say ‘Never Again’ and Cameron will agree. But then, thanks to the drastic cuts he has made to the strength of our armed forces, the Prime Minister need not worry himself unduly about Britain’s involvements in any future conflicts. He need not gnash his teeth too much about MPs’ reluctance to back military intervention in Syria because, as matters stand, Britain would be unable to fight a major war even if it wanted to.

This would perhaps make sense in a time of great peace, but the world is not short on existential threats. Syria’s brutal civil war isn’t just a conflict between fanatical Sunni and Shia Muslim militias — the exponential growth of extreme Islamist groups such as Islamic State poses as much of a threat to the security of the West as it does to that of the Arab world. As Andrew Parker, MI5’s director-general, recently warned, Isis terrorists based in Syria — many of whom have UK passports — are actively planning mass-casualty attacks on the streets of Britain.

Then there is Vladimir Putin’s Russia, which is trying to flex its muscles on behalf of the beleaguered Bashar al-Assad. Russia’s intervention has confirmed what many of us have been saying for a year or more: you will not defeat Isis by air power alone.

Nor, during a scan for possible global threats, can we ignore George Osborne’s new Chinese chums in the People’s Liberation Army. Beijing’s apparent obsession with dominating the South China Sea has put it on a collision course with both Japan and the US. Washington has finally found the courage to confront China about this — but if China really is angling for a confrontation, which side will Mr Osborne choose? Our long-standing post-war allies, or his favoured nuclear energy providers?

These are just a few of the more visible threats we may face in the years ahead (and that’s without mentioning the Falklands), and yet Britain cannot right now respond in any meaningful military way. Our armed forces are so feeble as to be almost irrelevant.

What did we do when Russia annexed Crimea? Downing Street dispatched 100 or so military advisers to Kiev to help train

government forces. What did we do when Libya plunged, post-Gaddafi, into chaos? We deployed 300 non-combatant military personnel to South Sudan and Somalia.

It is a measure of just how far the stature of our armed forces has fallen in the past five years of cuts that our allies no longer talk of Britain deploying ‘boots on the ground’. They joke about us putting a few ‘sandals in the sand’.

We find ourselves in this parlous position largely because of the conclusions reached five years ago by the last government’s disastrous Strategic Defence and Security Review. The review was conducted on the naive assumption, presented in the government’s equally egregious National

Allies no longer talk of British ‘boots on the ground’. They joke about us putting a few ‘sandals in the sand’

Security Strategy, that we faced no apparent threats to our security or national interests. It allowed the Tory/Lib Dem coalition to make the most drastic cuts to our defence budget for a generation.

The military has endured drastic cuts before. At the end of the Cold War, significant cuts were possible without losing fundamental military capabilities. But the problem with the 2010 review was that it prescribed significant cuts to military spending at a time when the defence budget was already under severe pressure as a consequence of New Labour’s ineptitude.

Tony Blair’s evangelical enthusiasm for military interventions was not matched by

much extra money to pay for them. The real scandal of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts was the crippling equipment shortages that resulted in higher British fatality and casualty rates. The MoD’s efforts to plug these gaps by relocating funds from other programmes contributed to the infamous £37 billion black hole in defence spending that the Tories inherited when they came to power.

If balancing the books was, understandably, the previous government’s first priority on defence, the undisguised relish with which some ministers set about degrading Britain’s ability both to defend its interests and project power has had truly catastrophic consequences for our military capabilities.

The scrapping of the Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft programme without any proper consideration of its likely replacement means that now, when Russian submarines try to monitor the activities of the Trident fleet in the North Sea, we have to beg the French to loan us one of their planes to patrol our territorial waters. Manning levels in the Royal Navy have reached the point where serious questions are being asked about its ability to crew both of the new Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers, while cutting the number of soldiers by one fifth means the Army would struggle to replicate the division-strength deployments it managed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The general consensus in the military is that Britain has cut the strength of its armed forces by one third since the last strategic review. Officers talk about the military being ‘hollowed out’, so that while it still looks as though we have sufficient kit, our lack of personnel, lack of training and lack of readily available supplies mean our position is deceptive. If we ever needed the military to deploy in strength, the deployment would be unsustainable.

The question now is whether the new defence review — due later this month — will change anything. The Downing Street line is that now that the Tories enjoy an overall majority, Mr Cameron is personally invested in rebuilding Britain’s military standing. This is supposed to have been reflected in George Osborne’s announcement in his July budget that Britain would honour its Nato commitment to spend 2 per cent of GDP on defence. That would be nice,



‘Call me old-fashioned, but I insist on the family sitting down at the table together via Skype.’

but what will this 2 per cent figure amount to once Whitehall has undertaken its customary accounting skulduggery?

Oliver Letwin, for example, who is regarded as the ideological driving force behind the last parliament's assault on our military infrastructure, is said to favour relocating a significant chunk of 'defence spend' to counter-terrorism operations — normally paid for by the combined budgets of MI6, MI5 and GCHQ. It's whispered that military pensions, a significant cost that is usually separate from defence expenditure, could also now be included in it. Michael Fallon, the Defence Secretary, insists that Nato, not the UK government, will decide whether these clever accounting tricks meet alliance requirements.

The best indication of whether the Prime Minister actually plans to restore the fortunes of our armed forces is whether it looks as if he would actually deploy the armed forces in any meaningful fashion — and here things look less promising again, and not just because his MPs would rebel.

Mr Cameron provided a telling insight into how he sees the future of Britain's involvement in overseas operations when he declared a preference for the extra funds to be spent on special forces and drones. It's an alluring prospect — no squaddies in body



'Bad news, I'm afraid... you're a junior doctor.'

bags; death delivered at a distance, risk-free. But as recent events in Syria and Iraq have shown, waging war by remote control only delivers marginal results. A year into the military campaign against Isis, in which the West has relied heavily on drones and special forces, Islamic State occupies more territory and boasts more followers than it did this time last year.

Relying on drones without useful intelligence on the ground can be highly counter-productive. In Afghanistan last month, a US drone hit what was supposed to be a Taliban stronghold in Kunduz, but turned out to be a hospital. Twenty-two innocent civilians were reported to have been killed and many more injured. This one drone disaster has been invaluable to Islamist groups across the world. Look what America does, they say — it kills the innocent and sick. Technology that was supposed to save innocent lives has ended up endangering far more.

We're all wary of boots on the ground — but the truth is that sometimes the alternative is worse. Look at Libya, where Islamist militants have prospered as a direct result of the government's refusal to deploy ground forces during the military campaign to overthrow Colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Although Mr Cameron was one of the cheerleaders for military intervention, he now behaves as though he would rather everyone forgot about his contribution to the creation of this lawless calamity.

It has fallen to Mr Putin to demonstrate that, while the West seems obsessed with waging war by remote control, there is no substitute for drawing on raw military power to achieve your goals. Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Crimea and perhaps even Damascus demonstrate what can be achieved through the application of force.

No one is suggesting Britain and its allies should embark on a campaign of conquest in central Europe and the Middle East. But if we are to prevent others from so doing, then we will need more than a few drones and special forces to protect our interests.

Con Coughlin is the Telegraph's defence editor and author of Churchill's First War.

ANCIENT AND MODERN

Aristotle on immigration



Among all the arguments about how many non-EU immigrants we should let in, campaigners are proposing a scheme for private sponsorship of Syrian asylum seekers. The idea of sponsorship for immigrants goes back to Athens in the 5th century BC.

Metokoikos (literally 'household-changer'), our 'metic', was the category into which any non-Athenian wanting residence in Athens was placed. While having no citizen rights, of which Athenians were very jealous, they did have access to the courts; but they were unable to own property, so were always lodgers, had to serve in the military, pay a metic tax and, if they became wealthy, were liable for taxes on the rich. Most came to do business, many very successfully.

Before they could register as a metic, they had to have a citizen sponsor (*prostatês*: 'one who stands in front of, guardian, patron') to support their application for metic status. Presumably the sponsor helped the metic to register with the state and his local authority, and (possibly) to continue to support them in some way or other during their stay (the sources hint at legal matters).

One of the purposes of the sponsor may have been to reassure citizens about a metic's general character. Two of Athens' metics mused on the question. The Sicilian speechwriter Lysias talked of a contract between city and metic, that honest, law-abiding behaviour should meet with fair treatment from citizens; 'discretion' and 'orderliness' were expected of metics. Aristotle, from Chalcidice in the north, observed that while metics played a vital role in the city, they had no share in citizens' political rights; but then, 'no one would consider a metic mean-spirited if he thought of himself as unfitted for office'. A good metic, like Aristotle, knew his place.

British citizens too will expect immigrants to adjust to our ways. One wonders if private sponsors might be asked to take some personal responsibility here.

— Peter Jones



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We could end HIV

A new drug could reduce new infections to zero – so why hasn't the NHS backed it yet?

MAX PEMBERTON

You have probably never heard of Truvada, but it is a pharmacological breakthrough that has the potential to consign Aids to the history books. The drug effectively makes its users immune to the HIV virus. In the US, the Food and Drug Administration approved Truvada for use over three years ago. Truvada is even covered by insurance companies. It formed the backbone of New York's HIV strategy, published this summer, which aims to halt the spread of the infection and reduce new HIV infections to near-zero by 2020.

Yet in this country, a conspiracy of silence surrounds Truvada, or Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP), as it is termed. The NHS claims that it is waiting on the results of its own studies to decide whether Truvada should be introduced. So while New York is talking about stopping all new HIV infections in just a few years, on the other side of the pond we are gazing at our navels. Meanwhile, HIV infection rates are actually rising: here, last year over 6,000 people in Britain became newly infected with HIV.

Those in the know in the UK have now resorted to buying Truvada over the internet in order to protect themselves. A year's worth from India costs about £600. Providing PrEP to high-risk groups is far cheaper than providing medical care to them once they have caught the virus. Yet in spite of the tremendous economic, as well as human, benefits, Britain is avoiding this wonder drug. Why?

The answer is that in our public health system, ideology and sexual puritanism trumps common sense. The NHS and the government refuse to stray from the same tired dogma they have trotted out since the 1980s: use a condom.

What the ideologues can't accept is that people don't like using condoms. If they did, there wouldn't be unwanted pregnancies and HIV rates would plummet. Just stating this self-evident truth is to risk opprobrium from sexual health campaigners and public health officials, who refuse to look at the evidence. Since the HIV epidemic of the 1980s, condom use has been the only form of protection against the virus that we have had. And of course condoms are the best way of protecting against sexually transmitted diseases. But they are only effective if they're used – and studies suggest that they're not.

A study of heterosexual men and women found that only about a third used condoms the last time they had sex. Another study conducted in the US found that condoms were used in only one in four sexual encounters. That's a pretty abysmal take-up rate. For gay men, it's about 50 per cent.

Yet still the NHS refuses to adopt a more pragmatic approach. The implicit suggestion here is that sex shouldn't feel good and avoiding HIV must feel like a burden. How dare people take Truvada and simply have sex that they find pleasurable?

Unlike condom use, where each time you fail to use one you risk HIV infection, stud-

Condoms are the best way to protect against STDs, but that's only if they're used – and mostly they're not

ies have shown that imperfect compliance with Truvada doesn't necessarily affect its efficacy – even if you don't take it all the time, you may still be protected. A groundbreaking study conducted in France even found that taking Truvada immediately before unprotected sex resulted in a 'very significant reduction in the risk of HIV infection'. The results were so marked that the study was halted and those in the placebo group were switched to Truvada as well.

As an example of the degree of ideological fervour that surrounds this issue, one only has to look at the furore that Bill Gates

caused when he tried to address the issue of the low rates of condom use. Two years ago he set up a grant of \$100,000 for anyone who came up with a testable hypothesis for a new type of condom that people would actually be happy to use. The grant stated: 'From the male perspective, condoms decrease pleasure as compared to no condom, creating a trade-off that many men find unacceptable.' This is not a controversial statement, as many who have used a condom will testify. But when this grant was announced, Gates was denounced by campaigners who said he was appealing to 'creeps' and 'pervs'.

The reason the iron grip of the condom fanatics has been loosened in countries such as the US is down to one simple thing: money. American insurance companies don't care about an ideological war, they just want to keep their costs down, and it's much cheaper for everyone to be on Truvada than it is to provide HIV-positive people with healthcare.

Truvada has the potential to be to gay men what the oral contraceptive pill was to women. It is a moment of sexual liberation. We can now pick up the 1970s where we left off, before HIV/Aids cast its long shadow over sexual enjoyment. And it's not just gay men – as rates of HIV infection are increasing in women, we need strategies to protect them too. Why not put Truvada in a combination pill with the oral contraceptive, so that all women who are not using condoms while on the pill are still protected against HIV?

There is an argument that widespread use of PrEP will result in people stopping using condoms. Firstly, there is not good, reliable data to suggest that this is the case. Studies suggest that those who don't mind using condoms will use them anyway, and those who do not reliably use them will continue to do so. In other words, behaviours continue, regardless of whether or not the person is taking PrEP. What this means, of course, is that in those who are not reliable condom users, the risk of them contracting HIV could nearly be eliminated. Of course, they would still be exposed to other sexually transmitted infections, but they would have been anyway; and the majority of those, such as chlamydia, are treated relatively easily.

We need to face facts: the battle for condoms has been lost. They weren't liked and the majority didn't use them. For combating HIV, there is now an alternative, but our medical establishment is refusing to countenance it. This is madness. It's not an exaggeration to say that every person who contracts HIV in this country is a victim of a stubborn sexual health policy that refuses to acknowledge this fact. We could eradicate HIV if those in power would just let go of their obsession with the condom.

Dr Max Pemberton is the editor of Spectator Health.



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Justice for Bishop Bell

The Church of England has rushed to posthumously condemn one of the greatest men it has produced

PETER HITCHENS

The Church of England has produced a lot of good men and women, but very few great ones. It is in its modest, cautious nature that it should be so. Greatness requires a lonely, single-minded strength that does not sit easily with Anglicanism's gentle compromise.

And I suspect the Church has always been hesitant and embarrassed about the one undeniably great figure it produced in the 20th century. To this day, George Bell, Bishop of Chichester from 1929 to 1958, is an uncomfortable, disturbing person, like a grim obelisk set in a bleak landscape. Many British people still disapprove of his lonely public denunciation of Winston Churchill's deliberate bombing of German civilians in their homes. Some still defend the bombing and seek to reconcile it with Christian teaching, which is hard. Others simply refuse to believe, against all evidence, that this is what we did. It is often said, though it cannot be proved, that George Bell would have become Archbishop of Canterbury — a post for which he was well qualified — had he kept his mouth shut.

And perhaps this is why he found so few defenders when, 57 years after his death, Bishop Bell was numbered among the transgressors by his old church, and said to have been a paedophilic abuser.

The church itself issued a public statement which correctly referred to the anonymous accusations against the late Bishop Bell as 'allegations', but in all other respects treated the claim as if it were a proven fact. Money had been paid in compensation. The current Bishop of Chichester, Dr Martin Warner, was said to have written to 'the survivor', apologising. He explained, 'I am committed to ensuring that the past is handled with honesty and transparency.' There were 'expert independent reports' (which have not been published). None 'found any reason to doubt the veracity of the claim'.

The Sussex police, meanwhile, 'confirmed' that the information obtained from their inquiries would have led to Bishop Bell's arrest, had he not been dead. Who can doubt this, given modern police forces' strong interest in investigating such alle-



Fair, just, brave: George Bell, Bishop of Chichester 1929–1958

gations against prominent people? But it merely draws attention to the long delay between the alleged offence and accusation. Had the bishop survived until the first allegation was made in 1995, he would have been 112 years old. As it turned out, he had been dead for 37 years, which is perhaps why the church did little at the time, and the police were not called to arrest and interrogate the bishop's bones. The charges go even further back, and refer to alleged events in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The church's document on the affair was available online and quickly found its way to the desks of several newspaper correspondents. Unqualified headlines resulted, and stories which proclaimed without reservation that the late bishop 'was' a paedophile, and 'committed' sexual abuse. 'Eminent bishop was paedophile, admits church,' said one. 'Church's "deep sorrow" over abuse by bishop,' said another. 'C of E admits "saintly" bishop abused child,' said a third. There were plenty of inverted commas

on display but none were placed around the accusation. No doubt this did not distress the Church of England, which has suffered several undoubted (and poorly handled) cases of proven abuse and which is anxious to show that it is now sound and rigorous on this subject.

All this is completely understandable. And yet it fills me with a powerless sense of outrage and injustice. It is perfectly possible that the allegations are true. But this is not some Jimmy Savile affair in which a great cloud of witnesses testify against a person, recently dead, whose life and works do not do very much to undermine the charges against him.

George Bell, among much else to his credit, was one of the first in Britain to see the National Socialist menace. He was the dauntless ally and reliable friend of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He opened his beautiful palace to exiles and handed it over to evacuees during the war. Against the tide of opinion, he pleaded the cause of anti-Nazi refugees in this country who were foolishly rounded up during the invasion panic of 1940.

Such a person may conceivably have been a secret abuser of children. But didn't this fair, just, brave man (these things *are* proven) deserve the simple justice of the presumption of innocence, and those protections so majestically summed up in the sixth amendment to the US constitution — to be given speedy and public trial by an impartial jury, to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation, to be confronted with witnesses against him, to have compulsory process to obtain witnesses in his favour, and to have the assistance of counsel in his defence?

Well, he cannot have any of these things because he is dead. And he left no descendants to defend his honour. In which case it is surely up to us, not least to those in the church (whose main duty is to uphold the good even if they are reviled for it) to try to provide some sort of justice.

By all means comfort and assuage the accuser, and compensate him or her (we are not even allowed to know the sex of the person involved). But in the absence of a timely, fair trial, did it serve the purposes of justice and goodness to make the matter public? To a secular mind, there is no difficulty in sacrificing the reputation of a dead man for what you think is a good cause. To those who believe in the immortal soul, or say they do, it is surely not quite so simple. As for those journals of record who presented allegations as proven fact, would they have dared treat any living person of such reputation in this way? Surely one of the things my trade most needs to prove is that it can and will act fairly without a judge or a regulator breathing down its neck.

Peter Hitchens is a columnist for the Mail on Sunday.

How do luvvies know so much about everything?



Because I just don't know what to think about the Syrian refugee crisis — not even after Simon Schama's powerfully cogent argument on *Question Time* the other week, where he explained that if you don't want to house them all in your guest bedroom you're basically a Nazi — I thought I might pay the scalps a couple of hundred quid or so to see Benedict Cumberbatch as *Hamlet* at the Barbican.

Apparently the really exciting bit isn't anything he does as the Dane but rather Shakespeare's rarely performed postscript where Hamlet comes back to life in the terrifying form of a preening, hectoring Old Harrovian luvvie to berate the groundlings for their uncaringness. 'A pox on the politicians!' this apparition is wont to declare, more frightful than anything glimpsed earlier on the battlements of Elsinore. And even if you didn't have a strong view before on those Syrians, you will by the time the collection bucket is rattled menacingly beneath your nose. Simply seeing Cumberbatch, all quavery and exquisitely modulated and indignant, is enough to dispense any doubt. As Homer Simpson almost once said: 'Luvvies. Is there anything they don't know?'

Well I can answer that. No there isn't. I've learned from the newspapers, from the TV and social media that there's not a single problem in the world, great or small, for which the luvvies don't have the definitive answer.

Ever been struck by the fact that from Jane Austen adaptations to *Poldark* to *Pointless*, there aren't nearly enough black and ethnic minority characters on TV? Well you're bloody right. Former *New Faces* and *Tiswas* star Sir Lenny Henry says so. And it's not about 'tokenism', God no. It's simply about 'driving up quality'.

What about 'ravishing' — is that a word we should still use? Not according to highly principled linguistic arbiter and sometime Scottish comic Frankie Boyle. He has been looking into its root derivation and was appalled by what he discovered: it's a bit 'rapey', he once warned his nearly two million Twitter followers.

Drilling for oil in the Arctic? 'A monumental act of selfishness and greed,' says Emma Thompson — and she should know:

she once played Harriet Pringle in the BBC TV adaption of Olivia Manning's *Fortunes of War*. Opposite Kenneth Branagh no less.

Fracking? Only the worst thing ever. Just ask the experts, like Dame Vivienne Westwood, who thought up the genius idea of putting safety pins and lots of extra zips, accessorised with dog collars, on outfits worn by people like Sid Vicious in the late 1970s.

Women's pay inequality? An absolute blooming disgrace. Never mind the fact that in the West, women below the age of 40 are on absolute wage parity with their male counterparts — Emma Watson knows there's still

Killing baddies and shagging top totty is no longer clean innocent fun: everything has to be made 'relevant'

something scandalous going on, as you totally would if you'd been Hermione Granger in no fewer than seven Harry Potter movies.

Press freedom? Overrated. A bloody nightmare in fact. Just ask the guy who made his name saying 'fuck' a lot at the beginning of *Four Weddings and A Funeral* and has totally no axe to grind about the tabloid press after what happened that time in LA with a hooker called Divine Brown. And if you won't take his word for it, ask Alan Partridge.

Traitor Edward Snowden? Oh puh-lease. Not a traitor at all, actually, but a bastion of free speech against the sinister authoritarian power nexus of the surveillance state. Susan Sarandon thinks so: she was Janet in *Rocky Horror*. So does Russell Brand, and he has, like, shagged everyone, presumably including his more famous ex-wife, Katy Perry.

Obviously I could go on like this for days, except the relentless sarcasm has started to

exhaust me. And it's not that luvvies have strong opinions that bothers me — of course they do: they're articulate, passionate people with a powerful media presence. Rather it's that all the opinions they have tend in exactly the same wearisomely predictable political direction, and also that this can have a tainting effect on their work — at least for those of who don't share their smug liberal-lefty *Weltanschauung*.

I appreciate that this is not a new or original point. But I'm feeling it particularly strongly, having just endured the new James Bond, which in my view is yet another victim of this pernicious, creeping luvvification. In the era of *Live and Let Die*, Bond was charmingly innocent, brainless and delightfully un-PC. Now, though, the franchise has been hijacked by Sam Mendes, a luvvie with a first-class degree in English from Cambridge, and suddenly we're supposed to see Bond and the various villains as emotionally conflicted characters with rich inner lives. Killing baddies and shagging top totty is no longer clean innocent fun: everything has to be psycho-analysed and made 'relevant' — like those ghastly modern-dress productions of Shakespeare which I'm going to ban when I'm your benign dictator.

Of course, if we went back in time and met the luvvies of yore, I'm sure they would have been just as insufferable. Wordsworth and Coleridge, say: once we'd heard them sing the praises of the marvellously bracing French revolution, we would never have been able to stomach another word they wrote. But the difference was that in the old days the opportunities for luvvies to promote their tediously wrong opinions were so much fewer and farther between. Also, I suspect they had a better idea of their proper place.

You can't imagine Edmund Kean coming on after *Hamlet* to give his audience an earful on what he thought of the Corn Laws. And had he done so, I like to think his paying customers would have shown more mettle than the ones who nightly allow themselves to be bullied by the Cumberbatch. Mummies are great and I love them dearly, but just because they can talk posh, quote Shakespeare and pretend to be whatever you want them to be, doesn't mean they've anything worth saying.



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AT CINEMAS NOVEMBER 13

The power of creativity

Sir: A rounded education should encourage creativity as well as maths, English, science and history if Britain is to compete in the modern world. Toby Young's claim that the arts world is exaggerating the decline of arts in secondary schools therefore deserves to be challenged (Status anxiety, 24 October).

In spite of his confidence, teachers do think that there is a problem. They fear that the focus on 'core' subjects means they shouldn't offer arts subjects. Students worry that studying the arts will damage an academic profile. But encouraging creativity makes people more adaptable, and helps prepare them for the uncertainties of life. The new head of Eton has argued that the arts are important in his vision for education, and he wants his pupils to develop emotional as well as academic intelligence. Do we want to deny state-school pupils similar opportunities?

George Osborne has championed the UK's achievement in arts on a global stage. Educational policy should support his belief in the power of creativity, and reflect the wishes of young people who want to achieve excellence across a full range of subjects.

Nicholas Serota
Director, Tate galleries

Wrong end of the elephant

Sir: Writing in his Notes (24 October) that 'If we want to save the elephant, we must legalise the ivory trade', Charles Moore has bumped into one small part of a complex beast and guessed the wrong conclusion.

The truth is that the global trade in ivory is finished. In February last year, five African leaders launched the Elephant Protection Initiative, which calls for domestic ivory markets to be closed in line with the 1989 ban on international trade (which marked the collapse of western markets). Among them are Botswana and Gabon, which have the world's largest remaining savannah and forest elephant populations. Five more countries have now joined, including Kenya. And the world's two largest ivory markets, China and the US, agree. On 25 September, Presidents Obama and Xi announced that they will close their ivory markets, and the US has already stopped all import and export.

That is not to say that the poaching crisis is not acute. It is. My inbox is constantly bombarded with the fallout from the illegal trade: dead elephants, dead people, corruption and serious organised crime. Now is not the time for muddled thinking.

The future of both elephants and rural communities across Africa depends on peace, security and tourism dollars. That

future depends on us acting now to protect living elephants, not dead ivory.

Alexander Rhodes
CEO, Stop Ivory, London SW7

Deradicalise Corbyn

Sir: Nick Cohen calls for the conversion from far-leftists into social democrats of 250,000 Corbyn supporters ('Converting the Corbyn cult', 31 October). Surely it would be simpler to convert Mr Corbyn himself?

The Home Office has had considerable success in deradicalising jihadists through their 'Channel' programme; could not their proven technique be applied to Mr Corbyn?

Mike Gross
Braunton, Devon

Forty is a male problem, too

Sir: I was amused to read Melissa Kite's protests about the sexism that women over 40 suffer in the workplace ('Forty is a feminist issue', 31 October). I was forced out of the teaching profession by left-wing management, and can assure her that changing careers as a man is no picnic either. I have been unable to find

employment for two years because I am 'too old' — at 46. I have, in searching for jobs, encountered a considerable number of positions advertised as 'female candidates only need apply', a stricture I have never seen applied to men. It is also worth noting that until recently women were allowed to retire five years earlier than men, despite the fact that they live longer. Where were the feminists' cries about 'sexism' then?

Finbarr O'Keeffe
Reading, Berkshire

Bile and Frost

Sir: Richard Ingrams's review of Sir David Frost's biography (Books, 31 October) dripped with bile. Yet he makes some very sound points about the beatification of Frostie, a figure whose reputation is most unlikely to survive his memorial in Westminster Abbey.

It is good to know that Ingrams retains his fierce passion and indignation. But his subject would, I am sure, have been amused — and unperturbed — by his adversary's vituperation.

Tom Blackett
West Byfleet, Surrey

Gwynne's grammar test

Sir: Because of the demanding nature of my grammar test (Diary, 17 October), the answers really need to be accompanied by supporting explanations — what follows is only the bare-bones version.

The test: give the parts of speech, including the grammatical part of any verbs, of 'boiling' and every instance of 'washing' in the sentence, 'She is washing in boiling water yesterday's washing in the washing machine that she uses for washing clothes.'

The answers. 'Boiling': present participle (verb-adjective). First 'washing': taken with 'is', continuous present tense, active voice and indicative mood. By itself, present participle. Second 'washing': either gerund (verbal noun) or gerundive. Third 'washing': noun acting as an adjective ('noun-adjective'). Fourth 'washing': gerund, acting both as a noun and as a transitive verb.

A fuller discussion of the answers will be on my website, gwynneteaching.com. I have provisionally chosen the winner, but, because I do not claim infallibility, the announcement will be made next week, just in case anyone should wish to dispute any of the above answers in the meantime.

N.M. Gwynne
Co. Wexford, Ireland

WRITE TO US

The Spectator, 22 Old Queen Street, London SW1H 9HP; letters@spectator.co.uk

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I may have to revise my view that crypto-currencies are Satan's work



I confess to being an out-and-out Luddite when it comes to bitcoin and other so-called crypto-currencies. To the extent that I think about them at all, I think that they are an ephemeral by-product of those creepy 'virtual worlds' in which obsessed gamers eventually go mad; that only such lost souls could seriously believe unregulated online money might eventually supplant the state-backed real thing; and that fashionable belief in them can only lead to fraud and loss. In short, I concluded some time ago, they are probably the work of Satan.

'Every normal person above the age of six and not over-affected by chemical stimulants should [grasp] that societal concepts such as "money" and "law" are not identical to the tokens and rules that hold sway in games,' I ranted in a review of *Wildcat Currency* by Edward Castronova, an 'expert on the societies of virtual worlds' at Indiana University whose wacky ramblings reinforced my hostility. Encounters in London with the clearly benign and well-intentioned Stan Stalnaker, whose Hub Culture social network runs its own currency called the Ven ('Every time you use it, you're helping the planet'), did not change my mind.

So I'm perturbed to learn that the 'block-chain', the key software behind bitcoin and its ilk, is being investigated by major banks and consultancy firms as a potentially revolutionary mechanism for all our transactions. Using a database shared by a network of computers without a central authority, this could — the *FT* says — improve security for end-users while slashing costs across the financial sector by \$20 billion a year. Even the Bank of England is said to be thinking positively about it. As with so many other changes in modern life and mores, I may one day have to set my prejudices aside.

Even less dull

'If a bank looks dull, it probably isn't' is a maxim I applied some time ago both to the Co-operative Bank, with its broken balance sheet and naughty-vicar chairman, and

Standard Chartered — which until 2012 was regarded as the steadiest of overseas commercial banks, rooted in its traditional Asian markets, resistant to takeover, and led by a sensible chief executive, Peter Sands, whose star rose as others fell during the financial crisis. Then came fines from the US for industrial-scale Iran sanctions-busting — and latterly profit warnings, a boardroom clear-out and a new-broom successor to Sands in Bill Winters, formerly of JPMorgan.

Now the bank has fallen into losses; it is about to axe 15,000 jobs and plough \$1 billion into strengthening its compliance function to avert further scandal; and it needs \$5 billion of additional capital to be sure of passing an imminent Bank of England 'stress test'. A strong franchise in China, until recently a big plus, is now seen by investors as a liability as the Chinese downturn gathers pace. The bank's shares have plunged 40 per cent since March; the biggest shareholder, the Singapore state investment fund Temasek, must be feeling queasy; and a merger with a stronger partner can no longer be off the agenda. Who'd have thought it might come to this? The trouble with a well-earned reputation for dullness — Lloyds and its HBoS takeover being another case in point — is that it often tempts bankers towards less dull roads to ruin.

Challenges to prosperity

The UK is the best country in Europe in which to start a business, says the Legatum Institute's annual *Prosperity Index*; with basic costs of just £66, we also offer 'the third cheapest place in the world' to launch your would-be Icap or Boden. It's a trend observable not only in the statistic that 600,000 new businesses are expected to have registered this year (up 36 per cent since 2011) but, if you look around, everywhere: among my friends, I hear tell of an antique shop, a cleaning venture and a geopolitical consultancy, all in the past fortnight. This despite the perils of the Living Wage, business rates, health-and-safety and all the rest.

No challenge is insurmountable, my entrepreneurial chums tell me, but there's one that's especially irritating — and that's the difficulty of opening a bank account for a new business. Our high-street banks, in post-crash sackcloth-and-ashes mode, have been under pressure from government to do more to help small firms. But the truth is they don't really want start-up customers, who have high propensities either to fail within the first two years or to underestimate by miles the credit their business will need if it takes off successfully.

So the banks' answer has been to offer attractive-sounding 'start-up business account' packages (including periods of free banking ranging from six months at Lloyds to 25 months at Yorkshire Bank) but to make the preliminary form-filling forbiddingly onerous, supposedly to weed out fraudsters — who of course get round it by stealing other people's identities anyway.

Clearly this leaves a gap to be filled by 'challenger banks' that present themselves as business-friendly — such as Aldermore, Handelsbanken and, for those in its region, Cambridge & Counties. I'll be interested to hear (martin@spectator.co.uk) from any entrepreneur who has found a bank that's genuinely keen to help.

Luck of the Irish

Another nugget from the *Prosperity Index* is that Ireland, in tenth place, ranks well ahead of the UK (15th) for overall prosperity, despite being well behind us in the category of 'entrepreneurship and opportunity'. This contrary result derives partly from the UK's poor score for education, which should give us serious pause for thought. Meanwhile, post-bailout Ireland — flat on its back when I first visited in 2010 — is the best performing economy in Europe, with growth expected to exceed 6 per cent this year. If the *Index* had a category for 'resilience and riding your luck', the Irish would surely come top. Happily I'll be in Dublin again this month, and will report back.

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BOOKS & ARTS



'Contrast (Order and Chaos)', 1950, by M.C. Escher, *Martin Gayford* — p54

Robert Douglas-Fairhurst discovers that, despite the films, Jack the Ripper never murdered in a swirl of fog
Carmen Callil wonders what America would be without Gloria Steinem

Sinclair McKay admires the brave MI6 heroine who described herself as a 'cheerful, fat missionary'
Anna Picard says that Northern Ireland opera is not for the fainthearted

Lloyd Evans hails a bold and unusual O'Neill at the Old Vic that zips past in 90 minutes
Kate Chisholm wonders if online will kill the digital star

BOOKS

From classics to unconsidered trifles

In this handsome two-volume anthology, Philip Hensher convincingly establishes himself as a world authority on the short story, says *Ian Sansom*

The Penguin Book of British Short Stories

Volume I: From Daniel Defoe to John Buchan

Volume II: From P.G. Wodehouse to Zadie Smith

edited by Philip Hensher

Penguin, £25 each, pp. 717 and pp. 734

ISBN 9780141395999/ 9780141396019

Spectator Bookshop, £20 each

Philip Hensher, the thinking man's Stephen Fry — novelist, critic, boisterously clever — begins his introduction to his two-volume anthology of the British short story with typical gusto. 'The British short story is probably the richest, most varied and most historically extensive national tradition anywhere in the world.' Take that, ye upstart Americans, with your dirty realism and your *New Yorker* swank! Read it and weep, ye Johnny-come-latelys! Look to your laurels, Chekhov and Carver. Jorge Luis Who? Maupassant? Bof!

And there's more — much much more. In a short introduction of just 35 pages Hensher sets out his stall, settles some old scores and convincingly establishes himself as a world authority on the subject of the short story, even though these days his own books — *The Northern Clemency*, *The Emperor Waltz* — tend to be vast baggy monsters with grand state-of-the-nation ambitions. (Though it's worth remembering that way back last century A.S. Byatt concluded her *Oxford Book of English Short Stories* [1998] with Hensher's 'Dead Languages' — quite a compliment, and well deserved. Hensher now dutifully returns the compliment, dedicating his *Penguin Book* to Byatt, and including one of her own stories, naturally.)

If you buy both volumes — Defoe to Buchan and Wodehouse to Zadie Smith — and you absolutely should, because as books, as objects, they are as good as it gets, quality paper, thick-set, sewn, and handsome enough to hang on a wall — you get the same introduction twice. Fortunately it's worth rereading. The second time around you start to notice the tiny little pricks and barbs that you missed the first time. Hilary Mantel gets a lit-

tle dig ('The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher' is 'not a very accomplished piece of work'). There is short shrift given to abstruse arguments and 'restrictive explanations' about the short story: Hensher blames such nonsense on 'the rise of creative writing as an academic discipline'. (Hensher is in fact a professor of creative writing at Bath Spa University, so presumably partly responsible.)

As for his definition of the 'British' short story, it is, as it should be, delightfully idiosyncratic. The work of Elizabeth Bowen — born in Ireland, lived in England — is in, because her 'subject seems indubitably British', whatever that means. But Katherine Mansfield — born in New Zealand, lived in England — is out because there is a 'strong movement', apparently, to regard

In 1914 W.W. Jacobs could expect to be paid £350 for a short story — not far off the annual income of a family doctor

writers like her 'as conferring merit on their place of birth rather than their residence' — which sounds rather like one of those silly academic arguments worth giving short shrift to, but never mind.

Hensher's tentative definitions of what characterises a typical British short story is perfectly unobjectionable: according to him the BSS is playful, it is 'rumbustious, violent, extravagant, fantastical', but also capable of 'withdrawn exactitudes'. That just about covers everything. You could probably argue that these are characteristics of all short stories, and possibly all literary fiction in all countries at all times. It would be

an interesting argument, if one that Hensher would undoubtedly win: he doesn't strike one as someone to be bested.

Just whatever you do, don't get him started on short story competitions. He despises short story competitions (with the notable exception, presumably, of the V.S. Pritchett Memorial Prize, for which he was a judge earlier this year). Competitions, according to Hensher, produce solipsistic drivel. They encourage work that lacks 'real energy', which Hensher doesn't define but which is presumably quite unlike 'unreal energy' and which seems to have something to do with 'the social interaction which is the proper subject of fiction'. Also, prizes are humiliating: 'No one... ever invited, or required Conan Doyle or V.S. Pritchett or Kipling or P.G. Wodehouse to put on a dinner jacket and shake the hand of a retired academic before they could receive a cheque for a short story.'

He's got a point. He also has a solution: pay writers proper money for their stories, so they don't have to enter competitions. In 1914 W.W. Jacobs could expect to be paid by the *Strand* magazine about £350 for a short story, not far off the annual income of a family doctor. One hundred years later to be paid £350 for a short story would represent an unimaginable fortune. Hensher's not naive enough to think this situation could change overnight, but he does have an interesting suggestion:

If an ordinary newspaper took to publishing, once a week, a short story and paying the same that it currently pays for the celebrity interview that fills the same space, then the short story in all its forms would soon return to the energy and inventiveness that it possessed until recently.

If you are reading this review and you happen to be a newspaper proprietor, an editor, or someone wielding great power and influence, take note: this is a good idea.

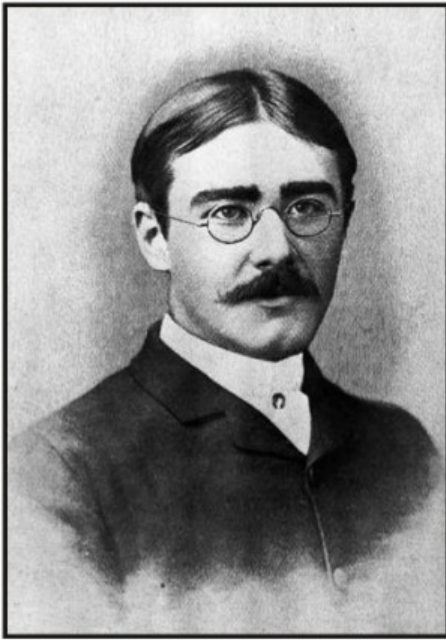
And as for the stories — there are classics, rarities, unconsidered trifles, and only the occasional dud. The book begins with Defoe's 'A True Relation of the Apparition of Mrs Veal', which is tiresome, but picks up immediately with Swift's 'Directions to the Footman', which is an early version of

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Clockwise from top left: Rudyard Kipling, Hannah More, M.R. James, Elizabeth Bowen, Arthur Conan Doyle and Candia McWilliam

the ever-enjoyable short-story sub-genre of story-as-form-of-ironic-instruction. ('When your master and lady are talking together in their bed-chamber, and you have some suspicion that you or your fellow-servants are concerned in what they say, listen at the door for the publick good of the servants.')

And so one reads on and on, through all 1,500 pages, through Hannah More and Thackeray and Conrad and Wells and M.R. James, all the time wondering at the range and quality of these tiny little things, some of them no longer than a few pages. (Hensher doesn't go in for 'short' shorts or flash fiction.) Who'd have thought they could squeeze so much into them? God,

you remember, Saki's good. But so is Stacy Aumonier! Stacy Aumonier: you remember Stacy Aumonier? No, me neither. And I'd definitely never even heard of T. Baron Russell, Jack Common or Leslie Hallward. But James Hanley, of course! And Shena MacKay! And whatever happened to Candia McWilliam (represented here by the beautiful, tragic 'The Only Only')?

In any review of an anthology the reviewer is duty bound to mention unjust exclusions and unwise inclusions. Being a diligent and forceful sort of chap, Hensher foresees these objections and gets his response in first. He admires work by David Rose and Penelope Gilliatt, he says, of course he does, but decides not to include

them in the book, 'with regret', which is a shame — it would have been such a treat for readers and a boon for the writers, too little known and appreciated.

We get Ian McEwan and Zadie Smith instead, whose work is perhaps more familiar. Oh well. 'Twas ever thus. Fame the perpetual motion machine. But Christine Brooke-Rose gets a look in, the experimentalists' experimentalist, as does Georgina Hammick, a total one-off, and Adam Marek, with 'The 40-Litre Monkey', which is as good as anything else here, by a writer little known, and which helps guarantee in the end that Hensher's anthology is bigger, better and broader in several senses than anything else currently available.



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'Nocturne in Grey and Gold' by James McNeill Whistler, 1874

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Poisonous pea-soupers Robert Douglas-Fairhurst

London Fog: The Biography

by Christine L. Corton

Harvard, £22.95, pp. 408,

ISBN 9780674088351

Spectator Bookshop, £19.95

'A foggy day in London town,' croons Fred Astaire in the 1937 musical comedy *A Damsel in Distress*, puffing nonchalantly on a cigar as he wanders through a wood that has already been half obliterated by belching Hollywood smoke machines. Today Gershwin's lyrics conjure up a nostalgic vision of life in the city, involving pale fingers of fog wrapping themselves around lamp posts and the muffled clop of hooves on cobbles.

Actually, for many years the reality of a London fog was far less appealing. It clogged your lungs and made your eyes smart; it turned the air into a murky kaleidoscope of colours (yellow, grey, blue) that appeared to be on the verge of turning into a solid. You didn't need to be Fred Astaire to '[view] the morning with alarm' or wonder 'how long would this thing last'.

As Christine L. Corton shows in her lively and engaging cultural history, for more than 100 years London fog did not only creep into people's homes and bodies. It saturated their way of thinking. If fog was an inescapable part of city life — in Dickens's famous opening to *Bleak House*, the word is repeated so often it sounds more like a curse — it was an equally omnipresent element in the cultural imagination.

The Thames had always produced natural

fogs; visiting London in 1791, Haydn reported one that was so thick 'one might have spread it on bread'. However, the industrial revolution soon gave birth to a new form of man-made weather. Thousands of chimneys created a pall of thick black smoke that, under certain atmospheric conditions, trapped sulphurous emissions and particles of soot at ground level. It was a form of airborne mess that was much easier to make than to clean up. By the 1840s, the Big Smoke was rapidly becoming the Big Choke, and while the politicians dragged their heels, nervous about offending powerful industrialists, London slowly submitted to fog's gloomy embrace.

'Fog's formlessness,' Corton points out, 'lent itself to a wide variety of representations', such as the fear that often it spread across London from the poverty of the East End, like a stain on the city's conscience, and ecological fables that imagined a tremendous future fog wiping out the city's inhabitants in a matter of days. And while fog confused physical outlines — Corton reproduces a *Punch* cartoon that depicts the silhouette of a man carrying a cello over his shoulder, who appears to be three soldiers in bear-skin hats — it also encouraged writers and artists to distinguish themselves from each other. In *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, fog is the setting for a story of degeneracy and murder; in a painting like Whistler's 'Nocturne in Grey and Gold — Piccadilly', on the other hand, fog moves centre stage. With its ability to smudge the contours of reality, no longer is fog merely the backdrop to Whistler's real subject. It is his subject.

In mapping out this imaginative terrain, Corton has a similarly sharp eye, noticing

details such as the protective goggles that were sold as 'fog glasses' in the 1870s, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's wonderful 1857 description of London's greasy air as 'the ghost of mud, the spiritualised medium of departed mud'. She is perhaps better as a cultural historian than a literary critic, introducing each novel with a rather clunking plot summary, but even when dealing with well-known literary works she often notices things about them that reproduce another of fog's characteristic effects. It makes us feel like strangers in a world we thought we knew.

By the 1960s, legislation such as the 1956 Clean Air Act meant that London's fogs had largely been consigned to the dustbin of history. They could even be turned into a joke, like the can of 'Fresh London Fog' that was advertised in an American newspaper, accompanied by a testimonial from 'a charming gentleman called Sir Foggy-Fogget'. Not foggy-forget, though, because even if the London fog had disappeared from the skies it continued to linger in the public imagination.

Today no film about Jack the Ripper would be complete without a swirl of sour yellow fog, even though all the Ripper's murders took place on clear nights. Sherlock Holmes, similarly, is almost always accompanied by fog on screen, a companion no less reliable than the trusty Dr Watson, despite the fact that Conan Doyle rarely mentions it in his writing.

'Foggy London town is no more,' Corton states in her final sentence, but her book actually pushes towards a rather different conclusion. Switch on the television, or open a novel set in the past, and it quickly becomes evident that fog has become far more than just a local quirk in the weather. It is central to the nation's cultural atmosphere, part of the air we breathe.

America's wonder woman Carmen Callil

My Life on the Road

by Gloria Steinem

One World, £14.99, pp. 304,

ISBN 9781780749181

Spectator Bookshop, £12.99

This is a book written by a most admirable woman, which is nevertheless — with some rare and excellent exceptions — most tiresome to read. Gloria Steinem has done heroic work as a founding force of American feminism and as an organiser, in America, for a myriad of causes. She is an icon of 1960s feminism, when persons such as she explained to women — mostly western women, but you have to start somewhere — that some sort of equality could be fought for and, if won, could change the world for all men and women. She spent some early years

after university in India and a Gandhian philosophy permeates her good works.

Now turned 80, she looks back at more than 40 years on the road, travelling from pillar to post, encouraging, teaching, fighting for the good, celebrating her America — to her a land of hope, if not glory.

The good things first. She opens the book with an account of her parents, most particularly her father, and what a lucky Gloria she was. There was no money in her family, or, in the British sense, class, but her father was a wanderer and chancer, who ran a dance pavilion when he was not trekking around the USA in a trailer. He gave his daughter his ebullience and wanderlust, and more, a sort of charming generosity that has reached out to the lesser mortals of this world whom she has served so well.

The percentage of founding feminists whose mothers were shattered by depression, who in Steinem's words 'never had a journey of their own', must be very high. Steinem's mother was just such a one. There are some other nuggets, such as a hilarious account of a beastly weekend spent with a much-fancied rich boyfriend and his millionaire cohorts. Unfortunately for us, we know all too much about what she battles against: segregation and the savage white racism still so prevalent in the US, a savagery echoed in its strange 'Christian' fundamentalist groups and isms, ferocious people who would murder Jesus Christ on the spot if he rose again to confront them.

But we hear little on European shores about the lives of American Indians today, so her account of her friendship with Wilma Mankiller, who came to be principal Chief of the Cherokee nation, is both interesting and moving. She also provides many bits and pieces of obscure information, such as that 'nushu' is Chinese women's secret writing language of 1,000 years ago, or that due to infanticide, honour killings and sex trafficking, there are now fewer females than males in the world for the first time in history.

These are the good things, and the heart is warmed to think of all those she has helped in her long life. There is not a minority whose cause she has not espoused, a person in need she has passed by in the street. She has been phenomenally active too in most US elections, canvassing, writing, always in favour of the Democratic candidates. Gloria is a creature of American times that encompassed campaigns for Eugene McCarthy, Bobby Kennedy, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. She is a great, sympathetic listener.

However, I now know more than any reader would care to know of what Gloria Steinem has learned from American taxi drivers, American truckies, American waitresses, American flight hostesses, American university campuses, American students, American movements, American elections, American politics and American food. What is surprising, to a British reader, is that such

generosity to causes and minorities can be buried to such an extent in the depths of a blinkered grasp of life through American eyes. Perhaps she had no idea her book would be read outside the land of her birth. She is much travelled, but her sense of a world that is not American is almost non-existent. Phi Beta Kappa we know from American movies, but what is Nehi Grape Soda? *The Howard Stern Show*? 'A driver with a Swedish name predicted that Sharon Sayles Benton would be the first African American woman to be elected mayor of Minneapolis' is simply not interesting to know, and the book is studied with initials for societies that will mean nothing to a British reader. In that sense, for thinkers such as Steinem, we Europeans are a forgotten minority.

But none of this is her fault. Why would any publisher want to waste good trees on publishing the book in this country? What is good about it — the campaigning thoughts of a fine American — would be just as happily presented to a baffled world in the edition published in America, available at the press of a button online. I know some lovely things about her father and mother and my knowledge of the inner workings of the USA has now been substantially increased — which I could well do without. On the other hand, what would the USA be without Gloria Steinem?

Yesterday's news Anna Aslanyan

Numero Zero

by Umberto Eco, translated
from the Italian by Richard Dixon
Harvill Secker, £16.99, pp. 208,
ISBN 9781910701089
Spectator Bookshop, £14.99

Colonna, the protagonist of Umberto Eco's latest novel, is the first to admit he is a loser. A middle-aged literary *nègre*, he dreams of writing his own book, but can't break the habit of alluding to others' work: he even refers to himself as a 'man without qualities'. One day in 1992, he is commissioned to ghostwrite a memoir about a newspaper being launched in Milan. *Domani* ('Tomorrow') will never be published: a tycoon who finances it plans to use it as a blackmail tool in his shady dealings. The proposed title of the memoir, *Domani: Yesterday*, sets the tone for this pacy book that doesn't take itself too seriously.

One of the reporters on *Domani*, named Braggadocio, tells Colonna he's got a scoop: apparently, it wasn't Mussolini but his body-double who was executed in 1945. The Duce himself spent the next several decades hiding in Argentina, or possibly the Vatican, while a conspiracy of 'stay-behinds' plotted to bring him back as a Fascist mascot. Braggadocio, with his ghoulish interest in corpses, doesn't sound very convincing, and it's not until the hapless hack is found dead that Colonna begins to think that he might have been on to something.

Whatever one makes of the various versions of Mussolini's death (or survival) at the hands of Italian partisans, followed by the public humiliation of his (or his double's) body, his shadow does seem to hang over postwar Italy, particularly the *anni di piombi*, 'years of lead' (1968–82), marked by terrorism and political instability. By having an unreliable narrator recount those events, Eco puts his reader on guard, exposing history as a soft science.

'News doesn't need to be invented,' Colonna quips to his colleagues. 'All you have to do is recycle it.' Despite all the sinister theories featured in *Numero Zero*, yesterday's news always makes one laugh, especially when read two decades after it happened. *Domani's* investigations are all hilariously cold potatoes; horoscopes are given more attention here than prostitution or the Mafia. As for the style, when it's suggested that misleading clichés such as 'the eye of the storm' should be avoided, the world-weary Colonna explains that, having taught the reader the meaning of the phrase in journalese, the press has to follow its own rules. At a news conference, the editor dismisses a piece on mobile phones, deeming

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them 'a fashion that's going to fizzle out in a year, two at most', something that's 'useful only to adulterous husbands, and perhaps plumbers'. Once the editor of *Avanti!*, Mussolini must be turning in his (marked, yet not-quite-confirmed) grave.

Vorsprung durch Technik Stephen Bayley

Professor Porsche's Wars

by Karl Ludvigsen

Pen & Sword, £30, pp. 272,

ISBN 9781783030194

Spectator Bookshop, £25

The aggressive character of the famous German sports car, in a sort of sympathetic magic, often transfers itself to owner-drivers. The joke goes: 'When you get into a Porsche, you feel you want to invade Poland.' In this fascinating and meticulously researched book, Karl Ludvigsen investigates the genetic spiral that gave Porsche cars the character of weaponry.

All German manufacturers were forced to supply the Third Reich. The BMW-sponsored London Olympics 2012 were held on a site devastated by Luftwaffe planes powered by its engines. But the relationship between Professor Dr Ferdinand Porsche and Hitler, a motor-racing enthusiast, was altogether wider and deeper: the engineer put his design expertise exclusively in the Führer's service, though only after rejecting an offer from Stalin to become the Soviet Union's 'car czar'.

Porsche, technically what we would nowadays call a Czech, was an outstanding representative of the Austro-German engineering tradition. While Britain's great designer-engineers have been idiosyncratic outsiders, Porsche was at the centre of a

*Ferdinand Porsche's son said:
'My father was Hitler's father.'
No one has yet claimed this frank
admission for the brand*

vast and disciplined caliphate of industrial alliances. He worked variously for Daimler, Steyr and Mercedes-Benz. His technical genius was considerable: his first car, designed for Lohner, had electric motors integrated into the wheels, a solution that would be remarkable today. But this was 1906.

His first meeting with Hitler was in 1926, when young Adolf introduced himself at the German Grand Prix, a race won by a Porsche-designed Mercedes-Benz. The formal meeting came seven years later. Hitler, to put it no higher, enjoyed technocratic symbolism and saw in Dr Porsche a rich source of it. Porsche became a mem-



Ferdinand Porsche, the inventor of the Doodlebug and the Panzer tank, was treated with rare deference by Hitler, bordering on idolatry

ber of the Nazi party in 1937, but this seems more professional opportunism than political conviction. Still, he returned Hitler's compliment by designing the astonishing Auto-Union Grand Prix cars. At the same time, to motorise the Volk, he created the *Kraft-durch-Freude-Wagen*, or 'Strength-Through-Joy Car'. We now know this as the Volkswagen.

The Volkswagen begat the Wehrmacht's jeep-like Kubelwagen (Bucket Car) and the amphibious Schwimmwagen (Swimming Car). The Porsche bureau also designed the Panzer tanks. Ludvigsen has marvellous photographs of Hitler's other educated chum, Albert Speer, test-driving a Panzer while a homburg-hatted Dr Porsche grimly hangs on. At the same time, the Volkswagen factory manufactured a flying bomb which Goebbels branded *Vergeltungswaffe-Ein* ('Revenge Weapon One'). Londoners called the V-1 the Doodlebug.

If Ludvigsen's fine book has a failing it is that too little is made of the personal relationship between Hitler and Porsche, although not very much is actually known. Like Speer, a sophisticated architect, Porsche claimed a sort of moral neutrality for his engineering profession: he was just doing his job. He was 14 years Hitler's senior, and the Führer treated him with rare deference, bordering on idolatry. Porsche's own son, Ferry, the man responsible for the modern

sports cars, said: 'My father was Hitler's father.' No one has yet claimed this frank admission for the brand.

At the end of the second world war, Porsche was briefly imprisoned by the Allies but released in time to supervise his son's 1948 launch of the 356 sports car outside a mountain hut in Gmünd, Carinthia. This was the first car to bear the family name, and (since the company has never much troubled to make public Porsche's military involvements, which ended only in 1981) the basis of the manufacturer's current popular reputation. Judging by the old photographs, Dr Porsche looks a bit wistful. Perhaps a delicate and pretty sports-car seemed frivolous after so many thundering tanks and whistling flying bombs.

Porsche's success is sensational. It now makes more money than its Volkswagen parent. My office is near the showrooms in Berkeley Square. I am always lost

in admiration at the sight of these fine cars. There's an aesthetic clarity and purposefulness that is deeply attractive. They are perhaps not beautiful, but they are visually fascinating and demand intellectual respect. Just like weapons.

Recent crime fiction Jeff Noon

A character in Sophie Hannah's *A Game for All the Family* (Hodder, £14.99, pp. 432) presents a theory: 'Mysteries are the best kind of stories because you only get the truth at the very end, when you're absolutely desperate.' This makes us realise just how scarce truth is. In books, as in life.

It's an idea to keep in mind as we follow former television producer Justine on her quest to start a new, quieter life in Devon. This dream proves elusive, as her teenage daughter makes a new friend at school, a friend who the teachers insist doesn't actually exist. Is the friend real, or just a product of a girl's imagination? Chapters telling of Justine's daily battle against threatening phone calls and psychotic neighbours alternate with her daughter's whodunit story, written as a school English project.

As the two strands intermingle, the novel takes on the mood of a fevered middle-class fantasy gone wrong. Hannah's previ-

ous book was an authorised Hercule Poirot novel. And Christie is definitely the model here, albeit twisted into new bizarre shapes. At the end doubts linger: is there yet another story hidden within the one we've just finished reading?

Some truths can hardly be thought about, never mind admitted. *Cornflower Blue* (Haus, £12.99, pp. 242) by the writing team of Christian Schünemann and Jelena Volic is set in Serbia and concerns itself with the long, difficult aftermath of the Yugoslav wars. Two guards from a unit of elite soldiers are found dead. A military court declares them victims of a ritual suicide pact and the investigation is closed.

However, inconsistencies in the report draw researcher Milena Lukin into the case. The guardsmen were murdered on the anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide; are their deaths connected to those terrible events in some way? Lukin comes up against the might of the military establishment, who have no interest in owning up to past evil, nor in punishing those who are truly responsible. A lie becomes doctrine.

The authors unflinchingly examine a country's guilt, and the subsequent attempts to forget, or even deny, the acts that led to the guilt. But the past infects the present, as it must. Milena makes a beguiling detective, and the details of her everyday life afford as much pleasure as her investigation. And the fact that the story offers no easy closure only adds to its power.

A very different set of problems beset the characters of John Niven's *The Sunshine Cruise Company* (Heinemann, £14.99, pp. 368). Susan Frobisher is turning 60 when her husband dies, leaving her mired in debt. Finding herself at her local bank's mercy, Susan decides to take on the bank at its own game: she robs them of a cool £4 million. Her accomplices include an 87-year-old maniac in a wheelchair called Ethel.

This is a bawdy, gaudy, rock 'n' roll spree of a book. The first chapter reads like a Radio 4 afternoon play, but we're soon off and running (or should I say lurching?), burping, boozing, cursing and carousing our way through the high jinks. It's as filthy as a weekend in Clacton-on-Sea, with the requisite pain and loss hidden just beneath the bedsheets. That great English dream — to escape to foreign climes with a nice little bundle — only really works when the life you're running from doesn't come chasing after you in the form of a sweating, corpulent, flatulent copper called Boscombe. But by the end, you're cheering the ladies on, wishing them well, hoping they find their escape route.

F.H. Batacan's *Smaller and Smaller Circles* (Soho Crime, £7.99, pp. 360) is a labour of love and hate. It's set in the Philippines in 1997, 11 years after the end of the Mar-

cos regime. Father Saenz is a forensic anthropologist who helped the authorities in identifying the remains of victims of the regime's slaughters. Now he finds himself tackling a different kind of crime: a serial killer is murdering teenage boys and leaving them on the dumps, where they make their meagre living as scavengers. This is a traditional thriller in every way, from the mutilated corpse discovered in the first pages to the morgue work and psychological profiling.

But the Manila location keeps it fresh, and Saenz's role as a Catholic priest allows him to react to people in a more personal way than any detective could. Auden's line 'Those to whom evil is done, do evil in return' is quoted, and it's well chosen. One especially moving chapter describes three different mothers reacting to the news that their sons' bodies have been found and identified.

This is a book of healing. It reminds us that truth not only exists at the end of a story, but continuously through the present moment, woven as traces, hints and clues to be grasped at even as they pass.

'Let's not be so disgusting all the time' William Leith

Home is Burning

by Dan Marshall

Hodder, £16.99, pp. 304,

ISBN 9781473624290

Spectator Bookshop, £14.99

Dan Marshall, the author of this memoir, loves to swear. 'It's very difficult for me to write a sentence without using a bad

word,' he tells us. 'That last sentence, for instance, was fucking impossible for me to write.'

Dan is young, rich and American. One day, in his twenties, he and his girlfriend, Abby, were on holiday, lying poolside at the Marriott resort in Desert Springs, California. He is in a world of material and sexual abundance. 'My siblings and I were lucky, living with the proverbial silver spoon jammed firmly up our asses,' he tells us. He has lots of sex. So does his gay brother Greg. His mother's cancer was 'under control'. As for his father, 'He'd start every day with a cup of coffee and a dump, and end it with a glass of wine. He was living the dream.'

But the dream becomes a nightmare. Dan leaves the pool to check his phone. There are nine missed calls from his family. Desperately bad news: his father, Bob, has been diagnosed with ALS (Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), or Motor Neuron Disease. In America, it's known as Lou Gehrig's disease, after the baseball player who died of it. The prognosis is terrible. ALS attacks the communication system between the brain and the rest of the body. It's what Stephen Hawking has. But unlike Hawking, most people don't live a long time. 'In other words,' says Marshall, 'Lou Gehrig's disease is a real ugly motherfucker and is pretty much a death sentence.'

The rest of this book, which is being made into a Hollywood movie, shows what happens when an affluent, materialistic American family faces an appalling crisis. It's sort of like Dave Eggers's *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, in that it's about a guy whose mother has cancer, but then his father beats her to the grave. But Marshall is always telling us what a slob he is. 'Dan, you're a fucking idiot, you fucking fat fuck. I felt fat as shit.'

Marshall wants to show us a certain class of rich people (the type of American family who have a big house, a maid, a Lexus, and so on) and how they cope *in extremis*. Of course, they do what anybody else would do. They swear, they yell, they argue. They tell jokes in bad taste — really shockingly bad taste. Marshall's great talent is to take all the swearing and sick humour and somehow make it moving. And it's extremely moving. As the book goes along, towards Bob's inevitable death, Dan jerks us into fits of guilty laughter — and also, simultaneously, swells our tear ducts.

He notices that his parents are 'holding hands and kissing all the time. It was sort of disgusting, really — a couple of dying fucks making out and shit.' His mother wants him to move back to the family home. She keeps texting him. 'I wanted to kick whoever taught her how to text in the teeth,' he

The Wolves of Memory

Loping through thick snow,
fur matted with ice,
they have lost the trace
that led them long ago
from a legendary tale
to this blank page of survival.

Their warm breath freezes
at the touch of air
as they huddle here
with sharp, bewildered faces
grown solemnly pale
and howl and howl and howl.

—John Mole

tells us. Then he does come home. He puts his life on hold. He becomes a carer.

Bob's disease rages through him. Dan's bad-taste humour runs in parallel, until it reaches a kind of fever pitch. When Bob needs an automatic speaking device, like Stephen Hawking's, Dan programmes it with, among other things, the words, 'Boy, I could use a blow job.' Then Dan's mum (whose cancer has come back) says that maybe she will give her husband a blow job. Worrying about this potential event, Dan has this exchange with his father:

'That's cool. I just hope I never walk in on that', I said...

'DANNY,' my dad managed to say in as angry a tone as he could muster. 'Let's not be so disgusting all the time.'

Dan drinks, and stuffs his face, but he moves towards a sort of enlightenment. At one point, he has ecstasy-fuelled sex. 'Okay, put your dicks away. Let's not get too pornographic here. Just kidding. Let's do,' he writes.

Towards the end, Bob decides he wants his breathing apparatus turned off, and sets a date. At this point, I put the book down; part of me couldn't bear to go on. The end is really sad. If I had to give a short description of this book, I'd say that it's crude, obscene, haunting, and very good.

A chronic case of mass hysteria

Richard Francis

The Witches of Salem, 1692

by Stacy Schiff

Weidenfeld, £20, pp. 512,
ISBN 9781474602242
Spectator Bookshop, £17

There have been many books devoted to the terrible events that took place in the small rural community of Salem Village and its larger sister, Salem Town, between February 1692 and May 1693. As Stacy Schiff points out, most of them are shaped by particular theses — she lists 13 in all. This approach doesn't just offer readers the consolation of an overriding explanation, but gives authors built-in filters, enabling them to concentrate on what proves their particular case.

Such a strategy is tempting because of the unruly complexity of the Salem phenomenon, with its hundreds of accusers, accused, magistrates, ministers and fearful bystanders. Schiff's own selective cast of characters runs to six closely printed pages and lists 88 names. Nevertheless, she herself chooses not to squeeze what happened into the straitjacket of a predetermined interpretation. Instead she has



Even the appearance of a lone wolf at Salem was enough to trigger accusations of witchcraft

assembled a vast array of data and then crunched it down chronologically, enabling her to tell the story day-by-day.

This is an impressive and valuable achievement. In discussing lacunae in contemporary reports of the crisis, Schiff points out that 'the wealth of detail was too much for anyone' — except, it seems, for Schiff herself, who is never overwhelmed by it. Readers may be, though, flipping back to the cast list, as with the baggier sort of Russian novel, to remind ourselves who was who.

For 400 pages Schiff sticks to telling the story as it might have been understood by an observer at the time, from the first disturbing outbreaks in the Parris parsonage to the final hangings and the soul-searching that followed them. Only towards the very end does she offer her own modest explanations: the girls might have been suffering from hysteria; Thomas Putnam, husband and father of prolific accusers, was a fraud and a manipulator.

This approach explains, and to an extent justifies, the misleading title. There were, of course, no witches in either of the Salems in 1692. In fact, in the sense understood by the court — people who have covenanted themselves to the devil in exchange for magical powers — there never have been any witches anywhere. But for much of her book Schiff persists with the rhetorical device of treating this delusional and fraudulent phenomenon (two strands that are difficult to unpick) as if the developing witchcraft narrative was established fact.

On the plus side, this makes her story vivid and disorientating, giving us insight into how the world might look if indeed there were witches abroad in it. The

disadvantage is that after a while we start to think of the accused, all of whom were innocent victims, as if they were actually guilty in some way. George Jacobs, who hobbled into court with the aid of sticks, told his accusers: 'You tax me for a wizard; you may as well tax me for a buzzard — I have done no harm.' For Schiff such brave defiance establishes him as an 'aging rascal', while Sarah Good, another victim, 'would seem to have wandered into the village directly from the Brothers Grimm'. We have to remind ourselves that Good was a real person, impoverished, homeless, probably mentally disturbed, who was horribly bullied and in due course killed.

And just as Schiff's approach can deny sympathy to the victims, so it tends to give unmerited credibility to their persecutors. 'One sharp-eyed 11-year-old saw Cloyse curtsy to the devil just outside the meetinghouse door.' That's what she claimed to have seen, not what she saw. Irony is so consistently sustained that from time to time author and reader can forget it's there.

Schiff gives more unanimity to this anxious, backsliding, divided community than is always justifiable. She claims that when Bridget Bishop, the first of the court's victims, was hanged there was 'a collective sigh of relief' across the Salems. Yet before finding her guilty the jury asked the chief justice William Stoughton to explain why the girls who Bishop supposedly tormented appeared unscathed; within days of Bishop's execution one of the judges, Nathaniel Saltonstall, resigned and the Massachusetts governor commissioned a report on the court's procedures. But perhaps simplifications and short cuts are inevitable, given the scale of the task Schiff has set herself.



*An early photograph of Sinatra, the flute-thin crooner.
From Charles Pignone's Sinatra 100 (Thames & Hudson)*

Frank's world Christopher Bray

'He never went away. All those other things that we thought were here to stay, they did go away. But he never did.' Who was Bob Dylan talking about earlier this year? Woody Guthrie? Elvis Presley? Or maybe, halfway through the sixth decade of his own career, himself? But no. The man in question was Frank Sinatra — the inspiration behind Dylan's latest album, *Shadows in the Night*.

That record is a collection of covers — from the great American songbook — 'Autumn Leaves', 'The Night We Called it a Day', 'What'll I Do'. We call such songs *standards*, as if they have been set, if not in stone, then at least on the stave, forever. But that isn't so. The fact is that when these songs were first performed, 70, 80, 90 years ago, they didn't sound any-

thing like the moody tone poems right now echoing around your head. They sounded like light opera: all barrel-chested bombast and hammy vibrato trills. The moody tone poems were pretty much invented by Sinatra — the man who standardised the *standards*. Nobody, not even Dylan, who has no real singing voice and who often enough bends his own numbers out of all recognition, can cover a Sinatra song without sounding something like Sinatra.

Sinatra sounded like Sinatra because he did more than just hit the right notes in the right order. (Sometimes he didn't even do that. Richard Rodgers and Cole Porter were forever imploring him to please sing their songs as they'd written them.) He sounded like Sinatra because he made decades-old songs sound as though they were being written in blood as he sang them. Long before rock 'n' roll critics had invented their cult of artistic authenticity, Sinatra had turned the 32-bar song into a

fully expressive form. He sang those songs as if they meant something to him.

A lot of the time they did. Sinatra really had yearned and burned for someone 'Night and Day'; he really had stayed up 'In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning' moping over 'The Gal that Got Away'. Not that he understood women. The three moods his work conjures — goggle-eyed desire, foot-stomping passion, lachrymose despair — are all essentially adolescent. They bespeak a man who knew as

*Ava Gardner didn't only
break Sinatra's heart.
She broke his voice too*

much about women as Freud did. Maybe Sinatra's second wife, Ava Gardner, was right when she remarked of his third, Mia Farrow, that 'Frank always wanted a fag with a pussy'.

'It was Ava who taught Frank how to sing a torch song,' Sinatra's most favoured arranger/conductor Nelson Riddle once said. 'She was the greatest love of his life, and he lost her.' Their crazed romance is the subject of John Brady's *Frank and Ava: In Love and War*, one of a clutch of books being published to mark Sinatra's centenary. It is a sordid, soul-destroying read, and not just because of Brady's execrable prose. Tantrums, rows, punches, pistols — the Sinatra/Gardner marriage was a tabloid inferno from the get-go. The best that can be said of it is that in making the lives of its two halves so miserable it brought a little comedy into everyone else's.

And tragedy. It's possible that had Sinatra never fallen for Gardner we would still have albums like *Where Are You?* and *Only the Lonely*. But they would surely have felt more of a put-on, have lacked the harrowing clarity and acrid yearning of the records we do have. For Gardner didn't only break Sinatra's heart. She broke his voice too. Before her he had been an almost heroic tenor. After her he was a hectored baritone. Yet the slide down the musical scale only made him ring more true. As Elvis Costello remarks in a mordant essay in the otherwise picture-dominated, limited-edition *Sinatra* (edited by Amanda Erlinger and Robert Morgan), Sinatra post-Gardner often enough spoke 'the lowest part of each melody ... [giving] him a great sense of tragedy and intimacy — people began to feel he was singing just for them'.

The far less costly *Sinatra 100* is a visual treat too — page after page of pictures in which, in one glorious get-up after another, Sinatra proves Dean Martin's contention that 'It's Frank's world. We just live in it.' Well, it was until the mid-1960s anyway. Then, as James Kaplan points out in *Sinatra: The Chairman* (the second vol-

ume of a monumental two-part biography that, if not the last word on its subject, certainly puts paid to J. Randy Taraborelli's title-tattling *Sinatra: Behind the Legend* and the cackhanded boilerplate of Spencer Leigh's *Frank Sinatra: An Extraordinary Life*, Sinatra suddenly began to fill out. Overnight the formerly flute-thin crooner became just another midlife sad sack.

At the same time, as the ever-aggrandising Kaplan fails to add, Sinatra's work went into decline. Pop and rock, which only a few years earlier he had decried as 'phoney and false', were now so dominant that even he couldn't steer clear. The results weren't pretty, and it would have been best if Sinatra had retired. Or at least *stayed* retired. As it was, he spent most of the 1970s making comeback gigs under come-off-it wigs. A few years later things got worse, thanks to the release of not one but two collections of overdubbed *duets* — with the likes of Bono and Julio Iglesias — albums that might have been recorded in order to define the phoney and false. Sinatra's standards were slipping.

But his *standards* weren't. For 15 years or so from the early 1950s on, he never put a foot wrong in the studio or on stage. Offstage, of course, things were different. Probably we'll never know what real-

ly went on between Sinatra and the Mob. (Not even Kaplan, whose two volumes run to more than 1,600 pages of closely printed text, has the dope on that deal.) The likelihood is that just as Sinatra was babyish about beautiful women, so he was infantile around violent men. Then again, so are many of the rest of us. The difference is that we can't sing 'I'm a Fool to Want You' and make it sound like the end of the world. 'Nobody,' Dylan said in that interview, 'touches him.' Thankfully, we have him to touch us.

Frank and Ava: In Love and War by John Brady (St Martin's Press, \$26.99, pp. 304, ISBN: 9781250070913)

Sinatra edited by Amanda Erlinger and Robert Morgan (ACC Editions, £1,000, pp. 400, ISBN 9781851498031)

Sinatra 100 by Charles Pignone (Thames & Hudson, £40, pp. 288, ISBN 9780500517826)

Sinatra: The Chairman by James Kaplan (Sphere, £30, pp. 980, ISBN 978187445285)

Sinatra: Behind the Legend by J. Randy Taraborelli (Sidgwick, £20, pp. 588, ISBN 9780283072062)

Frank Sinatra: An Extraordinary Life by Spencer Leigh (McNidder & Grace, £15, pp. 350, ISBN 9780857160867)

To the ends of the earth Wynn Wheldon

Landfalls

by Naomi J. Williams

Little, Brown, £14.99, pp. 315,

ISBN 9781408705766

Spectator Bookshop, £12.99

What's in a name? The identity of the author offers a clue to one of the themes of this intriguing novel: Naomi, a good Hebrew name; Williams, a stout Welsh name; born in Japan; lives in California. The earth is spanned.

Landfalls charts the voyage of two French frigates exploring the world at the end of the 18th century, after Cook but before the Revolution. Based on true events, the story unfolds in discrete episodes, short stories indeed, told from a variety of points of view, in changing cases and in differing person. The dramatis personae remain more or less constant; they cross-inform each others' stories.

In its work as historical fiction, Williams subtly outlines the cusp between *ancien regime* and republic. Attempting to carry out Louis XVI's order to 'perfect the globe', the explorers would have returned to a France without a king. The commander of



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the expedition, Lapérouse (spell it any way you wish, for he does), has a republican bent about him but enjoys being called ‘Count’ although he isn’t one; one of the savants aboard ship is a dedicated follower of Rousseau, a believer in the noble savage. Had he managed to get home he would have found his hero, the chemist Antoine Lavoisier, a victim of the murderous new politics.

The book starts with a map, which is always reassuring: you know where you are. However, the message it is almost impossible not to take from *Landfalls* is that mutual understanding is a tricky business. The explorers spend more time ‘rooting out cartographic heresy’ — overturning the Spanish inclination to invent islands whenever and wherever they felt like it — than gloriously discovering new worlds.

The French don’t understand the Spanish. Or the native Alaskans. Or, fatally, the Pacific islanders, though they do have a Russian interpreter. Quite often they don’t understand each other. Words are frequently not enough or too much. There are signs and nods and looks. Deceitful letters are composed. Truthful letters are corrupted.

It is a very modern book. Sexual politics are addressed, class creeps into every shivering timber, racial intolerances are unavoidable. It is extremely neatly done, and written with crystal clarity.

It may seem disingenuous to suggest that the book’s perfection is its weakness. If novels are maps, then great novels have blank spaces where be dragons. *Landfalls* is complete, not a dragon in sight.



Wollaton Hall, Nottingham, from the east, painted by the Flemish artist Jan Siberechts in 1695. In the foreground the D-shaped bowling green sits on a raised terrace with a banqueting house on its southern side

THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

Discover your inner nerd

Mark Mason

Bowled Over: The Bowling Greens of Britain

by Hugh Hornby

Midas, £17.99, pp. 221,

ISBN 9781905624980

Spectator Bookshop, £15.99

There’s a curious thing about the bowling green in my Suffolk village. The footpath running alongside it is on a slope, meaning that as you descend, the wall gradually rises and hides the players from view. What’s strange is that the older I get, the more I find myself slowing down to see what happens to the wood that’s just been delivered. Not knowing whether it reached the jack, or managed to nudge the opponent’s wood to one side, simply isn’t an option. It would be like going to see a whodunit and not staying to the end.

This book gave me the same feeling. Crown green bowls is one of those things you don’t want any personal contact with; you’re just glad it’s still there. A bit like penicillin, or Ken Dodd. And emphatically not like morris

dancing. That’s for weirdos, whereas bowls is for normal people, the normal people that you or I could become if we happened to grow old in a slightly different way.

Reading about the game, it seems, is much like watching it: relaxing, perhaps even a touch hypnotic, a cosy way of discovering your inner nerd. Learning that woods can be made from *lignum vitae*, I enjoyed the familiar warm sensation those words always produce in their cricketing context (it’s the wood used to make heavy bails that stay on in windy weather). Another cricket connection is W.G. Grace — after hanging up his bat he became a big thing (in every sense) at the London County Bowling Club.

Only a book like this could make turf interesting. For the best surface you have to lay the sea-washed variety (Wembley Stadium did likewise, apparently). At Lord Hereford’s Park in Ipswich, according to a 1714 report, the green was ‘rolled by Asses in Boots, that their Feet may make no Impression’. Attention to detail, you see: bowls obviously brings out the best in a man, and indeed in an ass. The Wellcroft Club in Glasgow boasts a horse chestnut tree specially grown with three separate trunks so it spells ‘W’. Players at Westhoughton in

Lancashire keep foil-wrapped jacket potatoes in their pockets during winter games for use as hand-warmers. What satisfaction for the members at Thirsk Athletic, knowing theirs is the only club in Britain located within a racecourse.

Even the language of the game draws you in. ‘Roving cot’, for instance, the version where you send the jack to any part of the green, rather than sticking to your narrow lane or ‘rink’. Crown (as opposed to flat) greens rise up in the middle: directing the jack there is known as ‘playing up to the knob’. If a club’s members compete against each other at random, it is a ‘promiscuous game’. This is a world with rules like ‘white above the waist at all times’.

To get the most out of this book you’ll probably need to be a confirmed member of the bowls community. The rest of us, meanwhile, can enjoy it on a different level. One of the many beautiful illustrations is a Scottish poster from 1864, giving details of that year’s tournament. First prize was a ‘silver tea service of the value of £50’. Third prize was a ‘plated tea service of the value of £10’. Second prize, on the other hand, ‘the value of which cannot be estimated in pounds, shillings and pence, will be given by the ladies of Kirkcudbright’.

Through the eyes of spies

Sinclair McKay

The Secret War

by Max Hastings

Collins, £30, pp. 558,

ISBN 9780007503742

Spectator Bookshop, £25

Queen of Spies: Daphne Park, Britain's Cold War Spy Master

by Paddy Hayes

Duckworth, £20, pp. 285,

ISBN 9780715650431

Spectator Bookshop, £17

Spying is a branch of philosophy, although you would never guess it from that expression on Daniel Craig's face. Its adepts interrogate the surface of reality — people, landscapes, texts — knowing that they will discover extraordinary hermetic meanings. They study fragments of documents, whispers of messages, and from these, they summon entire worlds. Possibly one of the reasons Max Hastings cannot pretend to be hugely impressed by the boasts of wartime spies is the philosophical nebulousness of what constitutes 'results' in secret-agent speak. Soldiers fight, shoulder to shoulder; battles are clearly lost and won. But those who work in the shadows — and in *The Secret War*, Hastings turns the spotlight on spies in every continent — are frequently ungovernable individualists whose efforts are more difficult to quantify.

Not that he has devoted 600 pages to being dismissive of every Special Operations Executive plot to set Europe ablaze, or code-breaking triumph, or brave infil-

tration, or double-agent deception. He writes of Hugh Trevor-Roper's native cipher skill, of Soviet 007 Richard Sorge, and of unsung Bletchley boffins like Bill Tutte with proper and infectious relish. The brilliance of the D-Day Double Cross deception — making the Germans look the wrong way as Operation Overlord began — is duly acknowledged. But for every formidably brave spy providing 'human intelligence' by scouting out enemy territory and personnel, he also provides a magnificent parade of crooks, alcoholics and fantasists such as Ronald Seth (his codename: 'Blunderhead').

And the agents' controllers are not beyond criticism. Hastings quotes the ninth Duke of Buccleuch, who was fag at Eton to Brigadier Stewart Menzies, wartime head of MI6. The Duke was mystified, he told a friend, 'how so unbelievably stupid a man could have ended up in such a position'.

Yet it was under Menzies that the Bletchley codebreakers were allowed their free-range anarchy; and the barking civilians who brought divine inspiration were gathered together on one estate. Part of the reason their German counterparts flopped was that their geniuses were spread out among too many departments, subject to the vicious in-fighting of a vicious dictatorship. And their failure was as nothing to the Abwehr chief Admiral Canaris, who seems — in all his serial misreading of intelligence — to have been marginally less competent than Herr Flick from *'Allo 'Allo*.

What makes a secret agent effective? The courageous exploits of Britain's SOE — parachuting agents into Greece, Yugoslavia, Sicily — did not, Hastings concludes

regretfully, make the gigantic impact that their excitable publicity suggested. Yet he shrewdly adds that their work in boosting morale was invaluable — and that was actually far more important.

He has drawn fascinating fresh material from Russian archives; the terrifying business of spying for Stalin is given a rich human depth. Even when Stalin received brilliantly accurate intelligence (for instance, clear indications in 1941 that the Germans were about to attack), his manic paranoia made him mistrustful and unwilling to act. Hastings has also delved deep into the US effort; the exhaustion of genius naval codebreakers in a basement called 'the Dungeon' who broke Japanese ciphers and foresaw the 1942 Battle of Midway.

She escaped Soviet agents by swimming across an icy Russian river in her underwear

But elsewhere, the Americans were frighteningly lax about security; there was casual blabbing all over Washington. This is a book that pulses along, yet is filled with acute insight into human ingenuity, frailty, and the ironies of evil; the author points out that the German cipher-crackers might have done much better if — like the British — they had used the finest Jewish minds.

And then of course there is the unavoidable matter of the Cambridge spies; this was never a subject to get Daphne Park — the fantastic heroine of postwar MI6 — started on. This extraordinary figure — the daughter of a poor gold-rush family in Tanganyika — had no doubts that the core of the service was loyalty: creatures such as Philby and Burgess simply could not be understood. The intelligence historian Paddy Hayes traces Dame Daphne's mind-boggling career, from tin-shack childhood, to Cambridge, to her efforts to pile in to the second world war, and then MI6; rising via postings to Moscow, the Congo and Vietnam at moments of maximum political tension to the senior MI6 position of Controller (Western Hemisphere) in the 1970s.

Dame Daphne's charisma (she once described herself as a 'cheerful fat missionary') is plain throughout: facing mortal peril in Leopoldville in a Citroen 2CV, surrounded by homicidal militia men and armed only with whisky and a brilliantly deployed giggle; escaping Soviet agents by swimming across an icy Russian river in her underwear; and most remarkably, rising through a clandestine service ill-disposed towards women.

The book is simply not long enough; and Hayes is rather breathless. But like Sir Max, Dame Daphne's story leaves us wondering about reality as seen through the eyes of a spy; and about how far spy work affected that reality.

— Alistair Elliot

Porridge Season

Tuesday morning. The Chopin of golden syrup is going to perform his Breakfast Fantaisie for teaspoon and dessertspoon. Such a treat to see those thin arthritic fingers pose a moment over the tranquil creamy surface. The oats lie quiet, possibly getting cold. But on the left a deep and mellow chord lands in the centre of the quivering target. Arpeggios, scribbles, signatures from the right cover the margins. What a score! It seems to wander clockwise now and widdershins in the same second, trailing off to silence with a few final isolated notes. All we can do now is to clap, and eat.

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ARTS

Freedom fighters

Juan Holzmann goes underground in Minsk with the Belarus Free Theatre

In a drab residential street in foggy, damp Minsk, four students are at work in a squat white building that was once a garage. They vocalise sequences of letters, clap their hands, throw their arms in the air, discuss their actions. Each — three girls, one boy — is elegant, light of limb, fiercely concentrated. The room they are in is about 20 feet by 20, with two blacked-out windows and four square lights on the ceiling. It's not certain that all the bulbs are functioning.

Down a tiny corridor is a bedraggled kitchen full of empty bottles that are, in fact, props. Upstairs there is a tiny rehearsal space, with a ballet-style mirror. The modest complex feels like a cross between an abandoned cricket pavilion and a bicycle shed. It is the only performing space, in Minsk, of the Belarus Free Theatre (BFT). Young Belarusians, such as these four, are lining up to take lessons there.

Performances, like rehearsals, all take place in secret. Audiences find out about them via social media. They're contacted by mobile phone, meet outside a shop and are walked to the venue. Addresses for shows in private apartments are also texted. The procedure is being replicated in London, where the company is currently being celebrated in a festival called 'Staging a Revolution'.

The BFT's three co-founders, Nicolai Khalezin, his wife Natalia Kaliada and director Vladimir Shcherban, live in London. They were granted asylum in Britain after fleeing Belarus in the wake of Alexander Lukashenko's rigged 2010 election. They campaigned to have political prisoners released. Kaliada was detained for 20 hours without water or sanitation, and threatened with rape. On a subsequent BFT visit to America, the couple appealed to the US government to place sanctions on Lukashenko — they met Hillary Clinton — and asked EU leaders to do the same. This got them branded as enemies of the state. Friends told them not to return. So the three BFT chiefs ended up in exile in the UK.

They are grimly submissive to their fate, but also full of jokes. Khalezin chuckles like a devil. The words 'Belarus Free Theatre' drip with irony. The company is of course the opposite of free: it is forbidden from working openly in Belarus — hence the anonymous ex-garage — and has no official funding. Being in and attending a show (always clandestinely, audiences donate what they can) are against the law.

Laws in Belarus are passed on a whim by Lukashenko's regime. The country, long a historical punchbag, is now effectively a police state. Lukashenko secured his first election more or less fairly in 1994, but has fixed all elections since, in his favour, including the most recent one last month.

The exiled trio consult their Minsk colleagues and students, and rehearse them, on Skype

A dead ringer for Ronnie Barker's Arkwright in *Open All Hours*, Lukashenko, with his Stalin-like moustache, loves ice hockey and is secretly despised by Vladimir Putin. As leaders they pretend to get along. His relations with the EU are fraught. Like North Korea's Kim Jong-un, the president believes his land to be blessed and beyond criticism. The BFT readily criticises his security apparatus — the only one anywhere still called the KGB — and anything that smacks of hokum and prejudice. But theatrical preoccupations that for us seem normal can be treasonous in Belarus.

The BFT will address depression, for instance. Its first production ten years ago was a searing version of Sarah Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*, directed by Shcherban, a revival of which kicked off the London festival. Two actresses, Yana Rusakevich and Maryia Sazonava, interpret this nakedly confessional text as a consuming love affair.

When I saw it in Minsk, with 50 people watching from makeshift benches, the women roared the pain with primal intensity, but also with blistering technical con-



Actors from the Belarus Free Theatre during a performance

trol. In a scene that lists the medication the play's patients are taking, fruit from a huge bowl became the pills, gobbled and spat out by the duo. The sheer daring of the acting throughout made this the most compelling production of any Kane play I have seen. 'It's completely screwed me up,' a Belarusian woman announced after the same performance, 'but I loved it.'

Lukashenko denies the existence of such darkness in his country. The BFT — as is normal for a gang of youngsters finding themselves through drama — explores sexual variance, and again this is problematic. One of Lukashenko's more spectacular declarations of self-congratulation resembles Queen Victoria's refusal to believe that women could be lesbians. 'Better to be a dictator than gay,' he said in early 2012. These days, Lukashenko's illegitimate 11-year-old son Kolya, reportedly sired on a pop singer and being groomed as his dad's political successor, is regularly paraded as a mascot at public events.

Khalezin and Kaliada dreamt up the BFT in 2004. In mid-2005 they were joined



PHOTO BY MENDEL TEDOKO/VIEWMAGE

Scene of 'Being Harold Pinter' at the Belvoir Street Theatre, Sydney, 2009

by Shcherban. Together they were clever, canny and fearless. They suspected that an independent theatre troupe with edgy tastes and a provocative aesthetic would hit the buffers in Belarus. So they solicited and got pre-emptive support from Vaclav Havel, the dissident-turned-president, who detected in what the BFT was doing loud echoes of his experiences as a banned playwright in communist Czechoslovakia, and from Tom Stoppard, who remains a patron of the company. This gave it an international profile of sorts. Unsurprisingly, Lukashenko and his cronies loathed the BFT, and proscribed it before it really began.

In a slightly riotous interview at the Young Vic, where the BFT has its office, the company's three founders laugh about Lukashenko constantly. For exiles they are remarkably cheery. When they started out, they say, Lukashenko had been to the theatre just once in 20 years.

'It was,' Shcherban says, 'kind of hard to state: "Let's start something only to run into problems." We began the company to move away from problems, in a way. Ten years

ago Belarus was in a unique cultural situation. The government already controlled all media: TV, newspapers and magazines, everything. Theatre wasn't controlled so much.'

But theatre was quickly controlled if you attacked or were perceived as attacking the government. The BFT had to go underground. There it has stayed. From London, the trio consult their Minsk colleagues and

'We're cool,' says Shcherban. And they are: charismatic, fun and now invited to festivals around the world

students, and rehearse them, on Skype.

'The student programme is called Fortinbras,' Kaliada says (the tribute to the only man left standing at the end of *Hamlet* is deliberate). 'This is important for us. We're lucky to have so many students, but at the same time it's unfortunate as it won't be possible for them to become a part of the BFT.'

So why do so many want to join this perilous enterprise?

'We're cool,' Shcherban replies, quick as a flash. And they are: charismatic, fun and now invited to festivals around the world, which is largely how the BFT makes its money.

Back in Minsk, the four students are being observed by a small woman with short blonde hair, Maryna Yurevich. Along with the two actors mentioned above, she is one of 13 who perform full-time. All of this happens in secret.

Yurevich prompts the students when they fluff, then explains to me in English: 'This is about co-ordination. They must practise, hard.' Next, they build an obstacle course with benches and stools, which they negotiate first with their eyes open, then blindfolded. Yurevich stares at every step they take, and comments brightly, engaged in the exercise with the dedication of a seasoned BFT expert.

Which she is. The other show I saw in Minsk was *Time of Women*, a verbatim play by Khalezin and Kaliada about three women activist-journalists jailed in 2011 for protesting against Lukashenko's 're-election'. The stage was turned into a prison cell. Yurevich, along with the two *Psychosis* performers, and with Kiryl Kanstantsinau playing the women's revolting interrogator, depicted defiance and courage with gutsy naturalism. The play's UK première is at the Young Vic on 9 November.

With its complex short history, and paradoxes of location and practice, how good is the BFT? On the evidence of what I witnessed in Minsk, not only are its performers fascinating on stage, this is one tight, rigorously disciplined, not to say very brave ship. It won't be sailing back into Belarus, national flags there waving, arms in open welcome, any time soon. But it is getting very seriously noticed in many ports around the globe. Nothing, surely, could annoy an absurd European dictator more.

Staging a Revolution will be presented across London until 14 November.



'Advance Town 29.3.80', by John Hoyland

Exhibitions

Reality check

Martin Gayford

The Amazing World of M.C. Escher

Dulwich Picture Gallery, until 17 January 2016

John Hoyland: Power Stations

Newport Street Gallery, until 3 April 2016

'Surely,' mused the Dutch artist M.C. Escher, 'it is a bit absurd to draw a few lines and then claim: "This is a house."' He made a good point. That is what almost all artists since the days of Lascaux have done: put down some splodges of paint or a line or two and proclaimed, 'This is a bison', 'This is a man', 'This is Mona Lisa'. One of the aims of Escher's work, which is currently displayed in an exhibition at Dulwich Picture Gallery, was to undermine such pretensions to represent reality.

At first glance, his images often seem meticulously, even aridly factual. 'Still Life with Mirror, March 1934' shows us a bathroom looking-glass on a table, toothbrush and paste arranged in front; but the reflection in the glass is of a medieval Italian street. It takes a moment to realise that this

Escher fits neatly, like one of his flat tile-like forms, in the gap between Magritte and Bridget Riley

is a Lewis Carroll state of affairs. The looking-glass is a window to a different world; the city cannot be inside this room.

In a work such as this, Escher (1898–1972) had an obvious affinity with his exact contemporary, the Belgian surrealist René Magritte. He, too, was struck by the fact that a picture of a pipe — or a dressing table — was not the thing itself. Technically, and in mood, he also had a good deal in common with Anglo-Saxon wood engravers such as

Clare Leighton and Eric Ravillious.

Escher specialised in print media, almost always in black and white, and deployed with extreme precision. Even in his early years, however, his lithographs and woodcuts such as the view of 'Castrovalva (Abruzzi), February 1930' had an eerie atmosphere and vertiginously plunging perspectives.

Already you get the feeling that those neat little black shapes might metamorphose into something else. A few years later, they did. 'Day and Night, February 1938' is a landscape viewed from the air. On the left, black geese fly over sunlit fields; on the right, there are white birds and the scenery is darkening into night. In the middle, the two flocks intersect, revealing themselves as just flat, geometric shapes — which in turn merge into the pattern of fields below.

A good deal of Escher's work was to do with this kind of duck/rabbit conundrum. He also delighted in paradoxes such as the building in 'Ascending and Descending, March 1960'. This is roughly in the style of Brunelleschi, progenitor of Renaissance single-point perspective. But the staircase on its top storey forms an endless, impossible loop around which figures trudge up — or down — forever. Escher was interested in infinity, not just optical illusions.

Some of his work has a cartoony, kitschy quality, which may explain why — despite his popularity with the public — Escher has not been taken seriously by museums

(there are hardly any of his prints in British public collections). He was limited and a bit repetitive, but this exhibition demonstrates that he deserves a place in art history. Escher fits neatly, like one of his flat tile-like forms, in the gap between Magritte and Bridget Riley.

Another figure who has yet to find a secure position in that scheme is the late John Hoyland. With the exhibition of his early painting that inaugurates Damien Hirst's Newport Street Gallery, however, Hoyland (1934–2011) is coming posthumously back to prominence.

He was, as it happens, the first contemporary artist with whose work I came into contact. A benefactor presented my school with one of his canvases, principally featuring a large green rectangle. Presumably no one knew either what to make of this or where to put it, and it ended up hung forlornly in a remote corridor.

This could stand as a metaphor for what happens to artists when the art world can't think quite where to place them. Hoyland,

GUY TAPLIN



Kingfisher and Fish I carved and painted driftwood 18 x 18 x 14 cms 7 1/8 x 7 1/8 x 5 1/2 ins

the nature of home

Emily Dickinson, one of Guy Taplin's favourite poets, once wrote to a friend: "I hope you love birds too. It is economical. It saves going to heaven."

This sentiment inspired the theme Guy and Robina Jack chose for the heart of their new joint exhibition at Messum's. Their Essex gardens are now nature reserves, and together with countless other feeding stations help create a wild abundance of birds, regenerating natural environments that have been starved out of a farm-efficient countryside.

Ian Collins
Writer and curator

Exhibition of works by Guy Taplin and Robina Jack 11th – 27th November

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MESSUM'S

born in Sheffield, and a creator of abstract paintings on a heroic scale, was — at least in British art — one of a kind.

He began brilliantly but didn't quite sustain that promise, which is perhaps why this exhibition concentrates mainly on the 1960s. Hoyland's paintings from that era were made up of squares and lozenges of soft red, orange and green. There was a connection with Rothko, but they do not have the looming, spiritual quality Rothko managed to give his oblong patches of colour.

Hoylands are imposing through the grandeur of their scale, but in a more architectural way. His paintings from 1966, a peak productive year, though clearly 'abstract', seem like simple structures in space. They suggest a corollary to that observation by Escher: it's hard to put down a few rectangles and not have someone say, 'This looks like a house.'

With the opening of this big, airy and beautifully designed gallery Hirst is following his erstwhile Svengali, Charles Saatchi, in setting himself up as an independent force to the mighty Tate (which ought to mount such reassessments as this, but seldom does). What's more, Hirst already seems to be succeeding. At the Frieze art fairs early Hoylands were shown on more than one stall and — as they do at Newport Street — looked unexpectedly strong.

Opera Horror show Anna Picard

Turandot

Grand Opera House, Belfast

Le nozze di Figaro

Hackney Empire, London

Chords as bright and sweet as pomegranate seeds burst and spill in *Turandot*, a splinter of bitterness at their centre. Left incomplete at Puccini's death in 1924, the opera is his most radical and most cruel. You can taste something of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* in the instrumentation, a musky roughness that rubs against the Italian composer's customary silky precision. Woodwind and strings cling to the voices of the monstrous princess Turandot, her intoxicated suitor Calaf, and Liù, the slave who slavishly adores him because he once smiled at her. So closely scored is the writing that it is almost suffocating. This is love as an addiction: violent, sleepless, lethal.

The renaissance of opera in Northern Ireland has not been timid or gentle. Under Oliver Mears's direction, NI Opera has staged *Tosca* in three historically

charged locations in Derry-Londonderry, and brought nudity to the stage of Belfast's Grand Opera House in *Salome*. With this co-production of *Turandot* with Nuremberg and Toulouse, directed by Calixto Bieito and revived by Lutz Schwarz, NI Opera makes plain its ambitions to be an international force. No concessions are made for an audience starved of traditional stagings of Franco Alfano's dewy completion or those who are squeamish about bodily fluids. Bieito's *Turandot* runs without an interval and ends at the last bar to be completed by Puccini, with a hopeless lament for a pointless death.

The walls of Beijing are made of cardboard boxes, the city a factory producing plastic baby dolls for western export (designs by Rebecca Ringst). The workers wear identical blue overalls, their individuality blotted out. Only Olaf Lundt and Karl Wiederman's lighting distinguishes the love-blind Calaf (Neal Cooper) and Liù (Anna Patalong) from the dust-masked masses around them. To Puccini's vicious pentatonic parodies and fascistic choruses Bieito adds more images of repression: a burning bicycle, backs flowering with bruises. Ping, Pang and Pong (the finely blended Paul Carey Jones, Andrew Rees and Eamonn Mulhall) are army officers who cross-dress in their downtime, wearing bridal dresses and the hooker boots of the women they menace and torture. The women are silent, their mouths taped shut, their bodies wrapped in clingfilm, their knickers caked in dried blood. Terror is everywhere, except in the hearts of those mad with unrequited love, senile (Christopher Gillett's pitiful, distracted, nappy-wearing Emperor), or with nothing to lose (Stephen Richardson's anguished Timur). Projected on the walls behind them, a face is slowly painted over with Chinese figures until all that remains are its terrified eyes.

In this horror factory *Turandot* (Miriam Murphy) stalks her prey with icy, miserable fury. Bald as a baby beneath her garish blonde wig, frumpily dressed in the pants suit of a female premier, she is ugly within and without. Bieito has merely exaggerated the qualities already present in the music but it strands Murphy, whose pitiless characterisation leaves her weak at the bottom of her range. Undone by Calaf's solving of the riddles, she weeps without feeling, smashing the skulls of the dolls, tearing their limbs from them. While Cooper is steadfast in his projection of Calaf's crazy passion, delivering a sturdy 'None shall sleep' ('Nessun dorma'), it is hard to feel pity for him. Only Anna Patalong's ardent, gleaming Liù is presented as a sympathetic figure. For the rest, one can feel only awe at the brightness and vigour of NI Opera's young chorus, and revulsion at the relentless crushing beauty of the orchestral writing. *Turandot* was a dystopic stretch for the Ulster Orchestra and conductor David Brophy, and perhaps for the audience too.

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Holly Frean, *Portrait of Picasso* (detail)



Janet Suzman's Royal Academy Opera production of *Le nozze di Figaro* relocated Beaumarchais's 'Folle Journée' to an artfully crumbling villa in pre-revolutionary Cuba, complete with smoking room. The power structure on which Mozart's opera depends was already under siege in the overture. By the interval the merengue danced by the workers had dissolved into open hostility against Henry Neill's Count Almaviva. The blocking was sometimes crude, the stage business sexy and perceptive, as Suzman pointed to the next episode in Beaumarchais's trilogy and the affair between the sad Countess (Emily Garland) and an enchanted Cherubino (Katherine Aitken).

A *Figaro* sung by young voices affords unusual clarity in the ensembles. Conductor Jane Glover handled these with breezy expertise, drawing some divine details from the student orchestra. If Neill's portrait of a handsome man too used to getting his own way and too quick to violence was strong, so too was Bozidar Smiljanic's performance as his burly nemesis, Figaro. Charlotte Schoeters was a confident Susanna, low on deference, high on sass; Claire Barnett-Jones a touching Marcellina; Lorena Paz Nieto a scene-stealing, brilliantly characterised Barbarina even in her unscripted, silent appearances.

Theatre

Class acts

Lloyd Evans

The Moderate Soprano

Hampstead Theatre, until 28 November

The Hairy Ape

Old Vic, until 21 November

What is Glyndebourne? A middle-aged Bullingdon. That's a common view: a luxury bun fight for past-it toffs who glug champagne, wolf down salmon rolls and pass out decorously on the lawn. But the reality is that it caters to those of my class (lower-middle) who want to boost their pedigree with an eye-catching essay in sophistication. The Sussex opera house was founded in 1934 by John Christie, a passionate and eccentric millionaire who believed the public should suffer for his art. He hated the idea of suburban businessmen 'catching a show' for two hours in the West End before falling asleep on the train home. He wanted his audiences to devote an entire day to his productions. His first theatre, a 300-seat tiddler, was too small for his adored Wagner and he was persuaded by his German producers that Mozart would be a better

match for the cramped venue. Christie considered the Salzburg ditty-meister a superficial talent but he accepted their advice and his opening season featured *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*.

Roger Allam is almost unrecognisable as the bald Christie with his thick grey thatch concealed by a wrinkled white scalp like the skin of a rice pudding. Allam's warm, rasping voice can move imperceptibly between exasperation and humour and he gives a brilliant account of Christie as a bluff, art-loving oddball at war with philistinism. Nancy Carroll plays his wife, the 'moderate soprano' (i.e. 'useless but tries hard'), who relied on Christie to ensure her inclusion in the Glyndebourne company. She's a typical pre-war simperer in a scarlet frock who dances attendance on her husband like a puppy in need of a biscuit. That's a shame. Carroll is a class act and she deserves better from a script that sometimes leaves her on stage for five minutes with nothing to do but stand there twinkling mutely.

The Moderate Soprano's structure is a little guileless as it flits between the 1960s and the 1930s. A narrator trots in and out to tell us where we are. This sat-nav device excuses David Hare the labour and discipline of making the story spring organically from the interactions of the characters. And he touches obliquely on the great debate

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Apple, Knife, Plumline, 2015, oil on board, 6 x 6 1/2 inches





Going ape: Bertie Carvel as Yank

about nationalised art. Those who resent the prejudices of the Arts Council will realise from this play that the alternative, i.e. private sponsorship, generates an identical problem and leaves creative people at the mercy of wilful amateurs who want to bully, fume and interfere at every point. This is an efficient, witty documentary that plumbs no great depths and stirs no volcanoes into life. It probably hasn't the oomph to sustain a West End run. Ideal destination: Glyndebourne itself.

New broom Matthew Warchus has abandoned Kevin Spacey's star-led populism at the Old Vic. His latest offering, *The Hairy Ape*, is an obscure experiment from the 1920s performed by a company without an international celeb. And the Vic is a huge theatre to fill. Impresarios go bankrupt this way. On paper, Eugene O'Neill's play seems to stick two fingers up to the public. It's a surreal fantasy, almost a monologue with illustrations, about an embittered, thuggish sailor named Yank who goes in search of

his proletarian self in the big bad city. The odyssey is triggered by a spoilt millionaire's daughter who sneaks into the stokehold on her father's ship. When she spots the grime-encrusted Yank shovelling coal into the engine's crimson throat, she cries out 'filthy beast' and faints into the arms of a blushing seaman. Confused and angry, Yank prowls the New York ghetto in search of answers. All he finds is captivity in various forms. He turns to theft and winds up in the slammer. He's tempted by the friendship of radical Marxists who then arrest him as a police spy. His final gesture is to break into the ape-house at New York zoo and swap places with a silverback gorilla.

Director Richard Jones lays on a full roster of expressionist techniques, co-ordinated laughter, synchronised table-banging, freeze-frame moments, and citizens in head-masks dancing across the stage in orchestrated diagonals. Some viewers couldn't stomach these zany contrivances and headed for the exit. Most stayed. It was well worth it just

to see a fresh side of O'Neill, whose best-known plays are rich, sprawling melodramas that go on far too long. This is a stark, narrow glimpse of a young man's descent into hell that zips past in 90 minutes. The writing is terse, pacy and relentlessly brutal. Designer Stewart Laing has created a series of tableaux that match the script's muscular ugliness beat for beat. And the play is a fascinating social document that portrays America as a culture stratified by class with the layers separated according to degrees of inherited wealth. Just like here. Exhilarating stuff. But not to everyone's taste.

Dance

West End wannabe

Ismene Brown

Carmen

Royal Opera House, in rep until 12 November

Raven Girl/Connectome

Royal Opera House

The love that asks no questions, the love that pays the price. . . The amount of unconditional love sloshing about at the Royal Ballet for choreographers and dancers is making this autumn in Bow Street a test of loyalty. At his season press conference Royal Ballet artistic director Kevin O'Hare smilingly promised us that the 2020 season might contain only works made in the past ten years. God preserve us.

Two of the autumn's three bills so far have been mixed programmes dominated by new or recent in-house contemporary ballets, and only Liam Scarlett's *Viscera*, in the current bill, should be longlisted for 2020. The rest should be longlisted for other qualities: Wayne McGregor's *Raven Girl* for inelegance, Alastair Marriott's *Connectome* for insipidity, and now Carlos Acosta's *Carmen* for incoherence. What does an artistic director do, exactly? Direct the art? Or indulge the artists?

We all love Acosta the dancer, with his super-gentlemanly manners and super-ungentlemanly twinkle. It's tempting to set aside his clunky 2013 *Don Quixote* (and a few other things), and just think about all the parties we've had with him on stage as he takes his final bow this month. But he has been proving he is no good at dramatic choreography for quite some time. The disaster of his *Carmen* has been written in the cards, en vain pour éviter.

Watching it is very confusing, as if its maker had thrown in every influence he's danced or seen, a sort of Instagram of choreographic selfies and diary mash-ups. Here are step motifs from favourites like *Diana and Actaeon* and *Mayerling*, Cuban-style

Fame-school ensembles, an opening scene nodding neatly at *The Full Monty*, a 30-second flash of a fabulous floor of plastic roses like Pina Bausch's *Nelken* meets the Tower of London installation. Apparently on opening night Escamillo had a pink-and-red tореador suit too, but when I went along to see Acosta in that role rather than the weedy José, he was in shirt and tie like a frat boy. Perhaps accountants were already starting to cut losses.

Arranger-conductor Martin Yates has disconnected Bizet's music from its formidable tautness and dealt it like a croupier around all sorts of styles and reference points. Fiona Kimm's excitable fortune-teller rushes on to sing 'En vain pour éviter' with an anticlimactic guitarist, Micaela's plaintive aria is peculiarly assigned to Carmen and José's love scene. It defines the lack of purpose.

The Carmen role comes from the legs-wide-open school of ballet seductresses, nothing to equal what Mats Ek or Matthew Bourne reimagined in their versions well known to Londoners. Saturday afternoon's Laura Morera tried nobly to suggest some sombre shading, playing opposite Acosta's Escamillo and Federico Bonelli's hapless José, which only emphasised the material's inadequacy.

It took the evening cast, the bold junior

Tierney Heap, who has a showgirl figure and a smug prettiness like a 1930s B-movie starlet, to see that the ballet is trash, so best dance it like trash. She was maddening, getting in people's faces, slurring her steps — brilliant. I quite cared when poor Vadim Muntagirov (wasted as José) stabbed her dead.

She was equalled in counterintuitive smarts by Matthew Ball, using his Hugh Grant-ish looks with imagination

Acosta's Carmen is a sort of Instagram of choreographic selfies and diary mash-ups

as Escamillo; where Acosta had displayed his familiar swagger, you did not expect a young City broker-type to pull off such an explosive solo. The very long sex duet that follows borrows motifs from oral and anal, which is different from your usual pas de deux. Really this is a wannabe West End show that missed its turning at Cambridge Circus — but there, I reckon, the producers and angels would stab it dead before it caused too much trouble.

The *Connectome/Raven Girl* double act in the other programme also lacks decisive vision, the programme and the ballets themselves. Both have been seen before to indifferent murmurs, which made it a rath-

er unexciting evening to offer punters at up to a ton a ticket. But then it was scheduled when Natalia Osipova was written in the casts, presumably to ensure that the stellar Russian had new works to dance. Once she pulled out injured, *Connectome* looked particularly wan, with Lauren Cuthbertson wandering sweetly in a white swimsuit through a forest of (apparently) neural connections, and Steven McRae and Edward Watson with nowhere to hide from droopy choreography in their Y-fronts. Arvo Pärt has become the go-to composer for non-descript moodiness.

Raven Girl should be fantastic, potentially a striking ballet plot about male fantasies about birds, with made-for-staging visuals from Audrey Niffenegger's graphic novel. But McGregor has little sense for flow and suspense, or how proportionately to allocate dance to character. The mixed-race Raven Girl wants to be a bird like her mother, but the raven colony — as danced by one of the world's great corps de ballets — tittup about like those little wind-up penguins you get in Christmas crackers. But maybe this is all just a bedtime story being written by her father, the Postman. . .

Very complicated, but it needed someone with real theatrical instinct and emotional juices, such as Arthur Pita. Like Acosta, McGregor is no storyteller.

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Saoirse Ronan as Eilis and Emory Cohen as Tony in 'Brooklyn'

Cinema

Lush, lyrical, exquisite

Deborah Ross

Brooklyn

12A, Nationwide

Brooklyn is a wee slip of a thing compared to the Bond film, *Spectre*, and cost \$12 million, as opposed to \$300 million, but what it lacks in length, budget, pre-title stunt sequences, theme songs, sports cars, exotic locales, babes in stages of undress, villains with master plans, Omega watches, rooftops chases, speedboats and exploding buildings, it more than makes up for with real storytelling and real feeling, which you just can't create from post-production CGI, don't you know.

Based on the wonderful novel by Colm Tóibín, with a script by Nick Hornby, and directed by John Crowley (who has come up through the theatre, and whose screen work includes *Boy A* and *Intermission*), this is old-fashioned, traditional storytelling at its most exquisite and moving; a tearjerker that doesn't put a foot wrong, and doesn't make you feel as if you've been had. (My tears are so easily jerked I always feel I've been had unless, as in this instance, I am willing to concede the film has earned it.) It stars Saoirse (pronounced 'Seer-Shah') Ronan as Eilis (pronounced 'Aye-Lish'), a young Irish woman who emigrates to America in the 1950s and has a sister called Rose, pronounced 'Rose', which is a relief.

The film opens, lushly and lyrically — the cinematography is lush and lyrical throughout — in the small town of Enniscorthy, in Wexford, where Eilis works for a few days

a week in the grocery shop owned by Miss Kelly (Brid Brennan), known as Nettles Kelly, because she is nasty and stings. Eilis lives with her widowed mother (Jane Brennan) and Rose (Fiona Glascott), but there's nothing for her here, beyond Nettles Kelly so, with the help of the church, her passage has been arranged to New York, where she might pursue a better life for herself. Eilis undertakes the grim boat journey — when both ends are erupting, a fire bucket can be supremely useful, is all I will say — to a Brooklyn boarding house where the landlady is a scene-stealing Julie Walters, and to a job in a department store, where she is con-

*This is a film to enter your heart
and your bones — and to carry with
you beyond next week*

stantly ticked off for her shy awkwardness. She is desperately homesick, and weeps with the strangeness of it all, and with the loneliness of it all, and is sometimes comforted by a kindly priest (Jim Broadbent). She helps him out on Christmas day, serving dinners to the homeless old Irish fellas who had built the tunnels and the railways and the skyscrapers and when one gets up to sing an Irish song, I was truly gone. Sounds maudlin, and sentimental, and in lesser hands it would have been, but Crowley allows the song to simply do its work, with no close-ups, and it is not just beautiful, but says everything you need to know about yearning for home without actually saying anything at all.

Initially, Eilis is a fairly dull instrument to whom stuff happens — quite like Bond, in fact — but, unlike him, she slowly starts to grow. Or is it quickly? Hard to tell. Although everything happens at a lick, it also feels lan-

guid, because such care has been taken with the colouring in, with the small but telling moments which may amount to little more than a look, or an exchange, or a funny vignette, as when her fellow boarders teach her how to eat spaghetti ('Yer splashin'!). So she grows, either quickly or slowly, and enrolls at night school, and falls for a sweet Italian plumber (Emory Cohen and, get this, there is real bone fide chemistry between the two!), and changes before our eyes. Her clothes become more colourful and sophisticated. She purchases an emerald swimsuit for the inevitable trip to Coney Island. She begins to assert herself, as a woman and as a sexual being. But just as she's poised to properly take flight, something dreadful happens back home — further tears were jerked, and quite a lot of them — and she has to return.

This is a film about belonging, then not belonging, then starting to belong, then having to choose between your old sense of belonging and your new sense of belonging, and that's enough belongings to be getting on with, I think. It is about the immigrant experience generally, and how we define home, as well as the tough, personal decision Eilis must make when she meets another man (Domhnall Gleeson). We care deeply about the main characters, who are allowed to be complex — Eilis's mother, for example, is both selfish and sacrificial — and you will be blown away by the power of Ronan's performance, which is a triumph of nuanced expressiveness; just the slightest adjustment to her body language and we know all that is happening within. This is a film to enter your heart and your bones. This is film to carry with you beyond next week. And not an Aston Martin in sight. Fancy.

Music

Fantasy on ice

Peter Phillips

In this exciting new era of *Spectator* cruises I have been put in mind of a dream event long in the planning: to hear Allegri's *Miserere* on ice, specifically on the ice of Antarctica. A number of things came together to put this on my bucket list, from the thought of dressing up like penguins (as usual) while we sing to penguins, to reading in the press that the Tallis Scholars 'have performed on every continent on the planet except Antarctica'. I want to fill a boat with like-minded enthusiasts and adventurers, and set off from South America via the Falklands to the Antarctic Peninsula, hoping to make a landing and a concert at Paradise Bay.

The plan is to fly from the southern tip of Chile (Punta Arenas) or Argentina (Ushuaia) to Port Stanley, from where the chartered boat will sail for the five necessary days to the Peninsula. On the Falklands we hope to give a concert (or sing Evensong) in Christ Church Cathedral, the southernmost Anglican cathedral in the world. The idea of joining forces with local singers is a sound one, though in my experience a catchment of 3,000 people spread across a wild terrain and sev-

eral islands tends not to produce good choirs. However, since the plan is also to film the whole trip for DVD and television release, I imagine an effort of some kind might be made. On enquiring of the authorities at the cathedral who might join in with this, we were told that there is a Gilbert and Sullivan Society, a good start of sorts, though possibly not ideal for Byrd and Tallis. We'll see. Meanwhile I may choose to forget what someone told me recently: that if in 1982 we had simply given every Falkland Islander a million pounds and a plot of land somewhere intractable — the Hebrides come to mind — we would have saved a lot of expense, and lives.

From Port Stanley it is hoped that the boat will travel to Wilhelmina Bay where, as the blurb has it, 'we frequently encounter playful humpback whales'. En route the Tallis Scholars will serenade you at dinner with lighter numbers from our repertoire. We discovered that Tavener's *Funeral Ikos* — music designed to make the hardest contemplate an early grave — makes perfect sense and sounds really quite merry when sung at four times the speed indicated by the composer. We could experiment for you along these lines. During the day you could attend our rehearsals, assuming we are well enough to hold them. One of the more scientific aspects of the trip is to put to the ultimate test the notion that voices carry more

clearly in freezing temperatures. We know something of this from recording in unheated buildings in the UK in January, the theory being that our voices acquire a crystalline quality not available in the summer. It would actually be of benefit to all if this idea could be exploded once and for all.

Paradise Bay itself was so named by the whalers who worked in these waters 100 years ago. The icebergs here are as spectacular as they come, the effect heightened by their reflections on the icy surface of the water. This is the place to make friends with

I want to fill a boat with like-minded enthusiasts and sing a concert in Antarctica: who would like to join us?

gentoo penguins — the ones with long tails and a cry like a trumpet — and green cormorants called shags, which flock here. This is the most likely place for us all to go ashore, put up some kind of temporary structure and sing. The result will surely be a concert with a difference: you will be the audience and, possibly, the chorus; but the essence will be the surrounding silence.

In addition to a professional documentary crew to make the DVD, I propose that we have a well-known composer on board, to write a piece for us to sing which has obvi-



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ously been inspired by what has been experienced en route. And then there is one of my tenors, who wants the once in a lifetime experience of singing the opening (tenor) solo of William Walton's 'Set me as a seal upon thine heart', while holding... a seal.

So. The scheme is to go in the first two weeks of February 2018. It may take a little longer than two weeks, depending on the weather, and it will not be cheap. We need philanthropists as much as music-lovers. But it will be the trip of a lifetime. Who would like to join us?

Radio

Community listening

Kate Chisholm

There's been a lot of fanfare and trailers about BBC Radio's new 'online first' facility. We can now get hold of programmes and listen to them before they go out on air, or download the series and listen to the whole lot in one go. Nothing so strange about that, given the powers of digital, its accessibility and flexibility. But the Radio 4 website is also offering new online-only content, which will never be broadcast in the traditional way. *Best Queue* is a drama series told in very short (just over four minutes) episodes. Angie and her family are waiting in a massively long queue that promises a large cash handout for those who eventually get to the front. But as the queue gets longer and longer things begin to unravel as tempers fray and people lose sight of normal life.

It is a clever idea but why not, then, broadcast it as usual on air and online? Online first, it could be said, will generate excitement about a programme and draw in the digital diehards, but why make programmes online only? Especially since the drama budget on radio has been pared down to the bone in the past few years, with more repeats and fewer original productions. Why, then, stretch it even further by extending the schedule beyond its on-air frontier?

I guess it creates opportunities for more experimental drama. The four-minute episode would not work within the Radio 4 schedule. It's too long to slip in between programmes and too short to have its own designated slot. But is four minutes an ideal length for drama? It's too short to build up character definition; or for the listener to have time to differentiate the voices. There is tension in *Best Queue* but it doesn't really take hold of you because four minutes is not enough to build up anything complex or deep. It all sounds rather cheap and superficial.

Meanwhile 6 Music is developing its on-air schedule to become more than just a DJ-led music station. *Paperback Writers* lets writers loose on the mixing desk, beginning

on Sunday with the thriller writer Stephen King (in an edition produced by Joe Hadow). The station's transmitters must have been blushing as we heard the Searchers, Danny and the Juniors, and best of all the disco-beaters KC and the Sunshine Band, so mainstream and boppy you don't expect them to be aired on 6.

'What's wrong with disco?' said King, completely unapologetic. 'If people hate me and want to downgrade my musical taste, I'll just have to live with that and cry hot tears of shame into my pillow.' He even threatened us with the Bee Gees, but instead reverted to the Sex Pistols and AC/DC in a playlist that was refreshing in its variety if not to everyone's taste. Next week's episode with Marlon James (who has just won the Booker Prize) is already available online, making nonsense of the concept of a broadcast schedule. In a few years' time I suspect we'll be listening to whatever we want, whenever we want, which may be a benefit but at the same time will destroy the notion of a listening community, that otherworldly yet reassuring feeling of not being alone as you listen but connected somehow in some aerial way to other listeners elsewhere.

Next week's episode is already available online, making nonsense of the concept of a broadcast schedule

Lives in a Landscape is back on Radio 4 (Friday), Alan Dein's series taking us inside the experiences of people he meets around the UK. This week's episode (produced by Sue Mitchell) not only gave us a conversation of such immediacy and honesty that it took the breath away but also showed how terrible things can have another meaning. Claire Throssell's husband lured their two sons into the attic of their home and kept them there while the 16 fires he had lit throughout the house took hold, killing the boys and himself. Hearing her talk about the tragedy was amazing because she had no bitterness, only love for her boys and gratitude for the community she has lived in all her life (Penistone, a small town in Yorkshire), which has rallied round to keep her going, day by day. But most moving of all was the testimony of her parish priest who had to go into the school where the boys were pupils

and talk to their friends and teachers.

'I was filled with horror at having to do that,' he told us, the feeling still in his voice. He was greeted at the door by some of the staff and the headteacher who gave him a big hug. 'My initial thought of how I'm going to get through the door, what am I going to say, was helped by them,' he told us, the memory of having to talk to those pupils in the playground as they struggled to make sense of what had happened, still fresh and raw, knowing that one of the boys had told the firemen at the scene before he died, 'My Dad did this, and he did it on purpose.'

Television

Best of British

James Walton

The first episode of *Let Us Entertain You* (BBC2, Wednesday) definitely couldn't be accused of lacking a central thesis. Presenter Dominic Sandbrook began by arguing that, since its industrial heyday, Britain has changed from a country that manufactures and exports *things* into one that, just as successfully, manufactures and exports popular culture. He then continued to argue it, approximately every five minutes, for the rest of the programme.

By way of proof, Sandbrook presented a fairly random collection of postwar Britain's greatest hits, which served both as examples and as opportunities for some nifty wordplay designed to hammer the point home still further. The fact that Black Sabbath, for instance, emerged from late-Sixties Birmingham just as many of the steelworks were closing allowed Sandbrook to declare with a flourish that 'Birmingham began to forge a very different kind of metal'. He also compared J. Arthur Rank to James Watt, the creators of the video game *Elite* to Richard Arkwright and, more generically, Andrew Lloyd Webber to a classic Victorian entrepreneur.

At one stage, the historical parallels went back further, when Sandbrook visited the Bodleian Library to show us 'a document that arguably shaped modern Britain as much as the Magna Carta' — and which turned out to be the first issue of the *Sunday Times* magazine. On the whole, however, he stuck to comparisons with people from the Industrial Revolution, whose entrepreneurial spirit can apparently be seen in everything from Jean Shrimpton's mini skirts to Damien Hirst's shark. As for the Beatles, they may have written some decent songs, but 'perhaps the best way to understand them' is as 'an immaculately packaged product' that exported Britishness to the world.

And why wouldn't the world want that? Certainly, Sandbrook's commitment to making sure we got the point was matched on Wednesday only by his patriotism. 'We love



'What do you mean you want them for sport?'

to run ourselves down,' he noted sorrowfully — but in fact Britain 'does popular culture better' and has contributed more of it to a grateful global audience than any other country (only later, and only once, did he add the sheepish rider 'relative to its size'). Indeed, Sandbrook proved so patriotic that he was even able to claim Bob Marley as one of our gifts to all those foreigners. Marley, you see, was made a star by Britain's own Chris Blackwell — which, as luck would have it, also permitted another parallel with the 19th century: 'Where the Victorians had imported Jamaican sugar, Blackwell was going to import Jamaican music.'

In fairness, Sandbrook's thesis is quite an interesting one — or at least it was the first few times we heard it. The programme also had lots of great archive clips, and a sharp eye for the arresting detail, such as a 1965 letter to the *Times* giving the Beatles due credit for having 'saved the British corduroy industry', or the heavy influence of the King's Road and Carnaby Street on the clothes shops of 1960s Caracas. Like a sort of slow-motion version of the 2012 Olympics opening ceremony, it did kindle an undeniable sense of national pride at all that we've achieved.

Nonetheless, the contrast between such thrilling content and Sandbrook's rather plodding exposition remained hard to ignore — a problem not helped by his addic-

tion to cliché. This was a commentary where every 'mix' was 'heady', the word 'British' was generally preceded by 'quintessentially' and Andrew Lloyd Webber turned within seconds from 'new kid on the block' to 'hot-test ticket in town'.

After a well-received one-off earlier this year, *The Secret Life of Four-Year-Olds* (Channel 4, Tuesday) is now a series based on the simple notion of inviting ten assorted children to a nursery for a week and filming what happens. It's an idea, you might think, that couldn't possibly go wrong — and sure

If four-year-olds were subject to the same rules as adults, most would be sectioned under the mental health act

enough, it doesn't, with the memorable examples of kids saying the darnedest things piling up at a quite staggering rate.

Before long, the girls were duly involved in a complex system of shifting alliances to rival anything in 18th-century European politics. After quickly becoming friends, Charlotte and Tia had a serious row when Tia disobeyed a house rule and Charlotte threatened to tell not only the teacher, but 'even Father Christmas and the tooth fairy'. (In the event, she just told the teacher.) The consequent falling out meant that when Tia wanted to play together later, Charlotte

turned her down on the unimpeachable grounds that 'I love Lola more'. 'I'm really sad,' lamented Tia to the camera, between sobs. 'Nobody's ever said that to me before, and now they have.' (Spoiler alert: the two soon made up.)

As for the boys, I suspect my heart can't have been the only one that sank when Theo's new-age mother claimed that he had 'a great love and a great sense of spiritual wisdom'. Unexpectedly, though, this proved to be pretty much true. Theo was first seen consoling the girls after they'd controversially lost a relay race against the boys, assuring them that 'you'll win next time' as his team-mates ran around in gloating delight. He then set about befriending Tyler, who'd spent the first couple of days on his own — and with such success that they ended the week in each other's arms declaring their mutual love. Meanwhile, of course, there was plenty of confirmation that if four-year-olds were subject to the same rules as adults, most of them would be sectioned under the mental health act.

The programme did also have a couple of child-development experts whose job was apparently to watch the action on TV screens and then tell us what we'd just seen — which left the programme more charming than particularly revelatory. On the other hand, when the charm's as overwhelming as this, who cares?

“We went to the cemetery and the first grave was one of our soldiers. It broke me up.”

Ernie Prior
Resident of The Royal Star & Garter Homes

Monte Cassino was one of the Second World War's toughest and bloodiest battles in Western Europe. When ex-trooper Ernie Prior returned there to visit the Allied cemetery, the first grave he came across was a soldier from his regiment. The memories are still vivid in his mind all these years later.

Today, Ernie needs specialist nursing and therapeutic care so that he can remain independent and enjoy life. However, as a charity The Royal Star & Garter Homes can only continue to care for Ernie with your help.

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Christmas markets

By William Cook

Why the fuss about German Christmas markets? Surely they're just schmaltzy shanty towns, full of stuff you'd never dream of buying at any other time? This tends to be my point of view until Advent... when I yearn to be back in Germany. Its motor industry may be mired in scandal, its football team may have lost to Ireland (Ireland!) but at least Christmas is one thing my cousins still do best.

So where and when to go, and what to buy? Well, most markets run from the end of November until Christmas Eve. They're great for hand-made decorations and festive food and drink, but for Germans a weihnachtsmarkt isn't just about shopping. It's a place to meet up for a mug of glühwein and a bite to eat. Perhaps a regional delicacy such as kasespatzle in the south or bismarckherring in the north.

The Christmas Striezelmarkt in Dresden, the Saxon capital, is Germany's oldest, dating back to 1434, and also one of the most picturesque. Look out for wooden toys from the Erzgebirge mountains, and what the Saxons say is Germany's best stollen. The baroque Altstadt has been beautifully restored (you'd never know it was bombed flat in 1945) and Advent is the best time to see it, lit up with fairy lights and flecked with snow. If you're feeling cynical about



Dresden's Striezelmarkt dates back to 1434

the festive season, standing in the cobbled Marktplatz as the first snowflakes fall will make you feel like a child again.

Leipzig is another East German city that's had a remarkable renaissance since the Wall came down. It's especially atmospheric at Advent, particularly if you're a music lover. A Christmas concert by the St Thomas Boys' Choir, in the church where Bach was choirmaster, is an exquisite treat. Once you've heard 'Silent Night' sung in German by these angelic boys in sailor suits, it never sounds quite as good in English.

Munich's Christkindlmarkt is a more Catholic affair. Its Krippenmarkt sells a vast array of ornately carved crib figures — big enough for a cathedral or small enough for your mantelpiece. Try a slice of Magenbrot, the dark Bavarian gingerbread. At the Weihnachtsmarkt in Coburg, one of the most romantic cities in Germany, you'll find potters, weavers, glass-blowers and all sorts of old-fashioned craftsmen.

You don't even need to go somewhere scenic to enjoy the magic. Last year, in workaday Frankfurt, I had one of the most enjoyable evenings I can recall. Like most Brits I was there on business, and Christmas was the last thing on my mind. But then I wandered through the Römerplatz just as they were putting up the tree, and by nightfall the square was full of people — eating, drinking, gossiping, in no hurry to go home.

I ended up spending the entire evening there. A German businessman I'd never met before asked me to help him get a drunk on to his homebound tram. The businessman bought him a ticket. I went along for the ride. The drunk jumped off at the first stop and disappeared into the nearest bar. Oh well, we'd tried our best, I thought, as I retraced my steps to the weihnachtsmarkt for another weisswurst, and just one more mug of glühwein.

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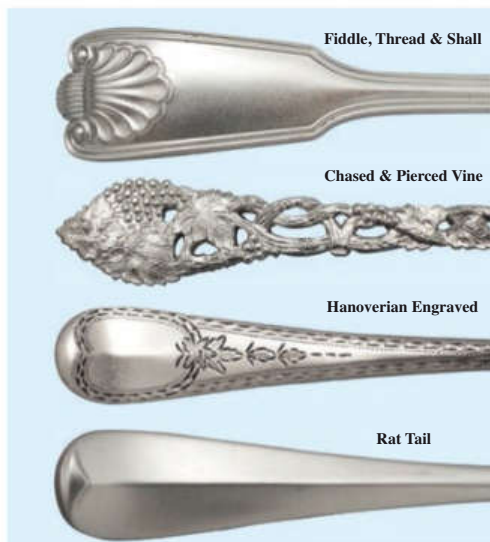
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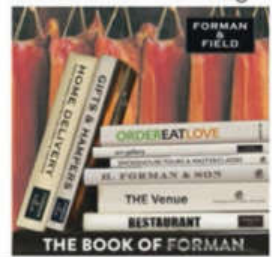
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'As I tell my children, ants are Marxist,
dogs are Burkean conservatives, and
cats are libertarians'
— Rory Sutherland, p77

LIFE

High life Taki



I have finally moved into my new flat, a jewel of a place in a pre-first world war Park Avenue building. The finishing touches won't be made until Christmas 2016, as work is only permitted during the two summer months.

That is the way it should be. The past three years have been agony for me. I've been living in an apartment that shook all day while Jeff Koons, a so-called artist, was putting up a behemoth in the shape of a house directly behind me. Worse, a Russian oligarch, who had hired dodgy construction workers to tear down and rebuild a monument to his thievery, had them ignore night-time regulations, which made sleep impossible. I had sold my brownstone when my children chose to live in Europe and my household staff announced the stairs were too many and too steep. It took three years to find a new home.

Now I sleep like the proverbial baby and have never been happier. My walls are so thick I had to have an expert come in and drill holes in them in order to use the internet. I no longer hear the fat lady upstairs fart at night, or Mister Goldfarb lament the cost of living every morning. Happiness is never hearing your neighbours. Manhattan luxury buildings of recent vintage are pretty horrible to behold. Roughly ten major buildings have come on to the market in Manhattan that advertise multiple swimming-pools and private lifts for the very, very rich and very, very vulgar. The ad says, 'Just because summer is over doesn't mean you have to give up your spot by the pool.' Nor their wives their lifeguards, I imagine.

Most nouveaux riches buy ultra expensive dwellings downtown in Greenwich Village. Once upon a time it was a Bohemian paradise lined with red-brick houses and watering holes catering to poor artists. Now it is the new Kensington and Chelsea. Thankfully, strict zoning laws have retained the iconic Woolworth Building and Chelsea's gilded Walker Tower, an art-deco jewel whose trophy penthouse is going for 70 mil-

lion big ones. Converting the inside and turning them into opulent homes seems to be the way of the future. The downtown skyline is retained, grand vintage details remain, yet modern amenities are installed. High ceilings, big windows; you get the picture. Back in Athens, know-nothings tore down beautiful classical buildings and houses and put up some of the 1960s' ugliest boxes. New York developers are as greedy as they come, but the zoning laws keep them innovative. It's what makes New York New York. The Gilded and Jazz Age predecessors didn't include swimming-pools or private elevators, but as long as the outside is preserved, let the nouveaux have some fun inside.

Decoration is something else, of course. New money doesn't go for that worn look à la Eaton Terrace. No moth-eaten contrived shabbiness for our new arrivals. No sirree! Some go for the rugged look — weathered steel and exposed concrete. Others prefer sweeping curves and cubes. Monochromatic palettes are the sine qua non. They're considered classy with a capital C. The latest craze is mixing primitive with industrial, ancient and contemporary. I find it all very ugly, but then I only go for the traditional understated look, with autumnal sepias and wintry greys, as sought after by the new rich as a cross is by vampires.

When I first began house-hunting in London and then in New York 40 or 50 years ago, it was a simple affair. One looked for a decent apartment in a nice building on the Upper East Side where one's friends lived and presto. Expansive entertaining spaces, wraparound windows, high-end windowed chef's kitchen with top-of-the line appliances were science fiction. Media rooms were not even science fiction; they were Hollywood wet dreams. Jumbo TVs were as unimaginable as life on Saturn. I can't remember anyone who had a gym at home, except for

Porfirio Rubirosa, who had a tiny boxing ring inside his house outside Paris, and when I say tiny, one crossed the ring with one left jab. Now gyms and screening rooms and pools are de rigueur, and no vulgarian will be caught without them.

They say that the very newly rich profess heroic bohemianism, but not at home. The latest advertisement is selling space for a large yacht in a non-tow-away place near the glass horror downtown. Boat tow-away zone? Nurse, help! I've always loathed indoor swimming-pools — is there anything more annoying than the suckling of a pool's gutters, or less inviting than the smell of chlorine? — yet no new structure is complete without one. The rot has also spread to Gstaad, where chalets without swimming-pools are sold in the mid-market category. Actually, one agent told me that my chalet was like a beautiful woman with a club foot. No swimming-pool.

Still, things could be worse, and I'll tell you why. The once beautiful model Stephanie Seymour has two sons, aged 21 and 19 respectively, from her marriage to the multimillionaire developer Peter Brant. The boys are ubiquitous around town and recently gave an interview to the *New York Post* about their make-up. They wear make-up and their mother advises them on how to apply it. That made me furious. Bloody hell, I thought — now they tell me. Only now that Lara and Olenka and Mary have told me to go to hell do I learn that I could have been wearing make-up all this time. Next time you see Taki, look for highlighter!

Low life Jeremy Clarke



She was dying for a mad night out, she said, so where was I going to take her? I know, I said. If they're playing tonight, we'll go and see Society Rocks, the most electrifying covers band I know. Their Facebook page said they were playing in Exmouth, 40 miles away. Society Rocks are a stubbornly local outfit, and I was surprised that they were venturing so far



'You have the right to keep your phone
on "silent" ...'

afield. I booked a B&B off Exmouth seafront and off we went.

The friendly receptionist at the Dolphin asked us what our plans were for the evening. 'You haven't come to see Jake Wood making a special appearance at the Fever Boutique nightclub, have you?' she said. 'Jake Wood?' I said. She looked sorry for me. 'Max Branning?' she said. 'The car dealer in *EastEnders*?' No, we said, we'd come to see Society Rocks at the Park Hotel. She looked even more sorry for us. 'The Park? There won't be many in there tonight, unless the band has a following. Have they a following?' 'I'm afraid we're it,' I said. She gave us a tip. 'The Fever Boutique is near the Park. If it's dead at the Park, you can go and see Jake Wood.' Here she looked left and right to see if anyone was listening, then hissed devoutly, 'And he's staying here!'

We took a cab to the Park hotel. As I leaned over to pay the driver, I could hear the band in full cry. What I expected to see when I walked through the door was a raucous rough house, four deep at the bar, with beer flying. What I saw was the band giving it everything they had to a huge and all but empty function room. The singer was pogo-ing manically and belting out the lyrics to 'White Riot' by the Clash. Scattered about at tables in front of him were four, seated, nonplussed couples, as distant from the band and as far flung from each other as the Leeward Islands. There wasn't a single wagging toe. They could have been waiting for a bus. A half a dozen old men perched on stools at the bar had their backs conspicuously turned. The barman served me two juggernaut gins and winced his apologies for the racket.

We took our drinks to the front row of empty tables and wondered whether to stand or sit. It seemed impolite to sit. But maybe Exmouth is a such a cool place, and the standard of rock'n'roll there so high, that sitting down is how they take their pub bands. So we sat down in the eye of a rock'n'roll hurricane with nothing between us and the band except ten feet of empty dance floor. An audience outnumbering the five-piece band by three had aroused a contrarian spirit in the band, and they were playing as if their lives depended on it. My friend is a rock chick and she couldn't believe what she was seeing, nor the circumstances in which she was seeing it. She preferred their cover to the original, she yelled. 'Society Rocks, darling,' I yelled back.

The wall of sound collapsed. The number had finished. Deathly silence. Someone at the back of the room clapped half-heartedly or perhaps ironically. The singer said he was sorry if they'd woken someone up, and he hoped they were going to like this next one. Then the aural hurricane was restored with 'Pretty Vacant' by the Sex Pistols. Well, I for one didn't intend sitting that one out. It would have been like sitting down to watch the closing of the gate at Hougoumont farmhouse. We tipped our gins down our throats and took to the dance floor, where we were immediate-

ly joined by an unkempt, elderly man whose principal dance move was to raise his arms and feel his way across the ceiling with his fingertips.

The band played for a solid hour and we got pissed and danced like dervishes in front of them. We had our mad night. Then we rounded it off by stopping on the way back to see Jake Wood make his special guest appearance at the Fever Boutique. The nightclub was packed; everyone in it was under 25 and off their faces. Just after midnight an unsmiling Jake Wood appeared in the DJ's perspex pulpit. He was given a microphone. 'If you're a beautiful woman,' he said, 'come up and make yourself known.' He gave the microphone back. That was his appearance. I went over, reached up, offered him my right hand and said, 'See you at breakfast, old son.' Perhaps he couldn't hear me. Perhaps he was in character. But he registered only my outstretched hand.

He wasn't at breakfast, anyway. He'd checked out early. They'd given him a banana to eat on the road, said the waitress.

Real life Melissa Kite



A letter has arrived summoning me to parents' evening to discuss Cydney's progress. Yes, I am aware that Cydney is a dog. But it seems that my vet is not aware. Or if he is, he is doing a good impression of pretending she is entitled to the same checks and balances the state affords children.

'Dear Miss Kite and Cydney (Byrecoc Cinemon Jonquil),' began the letter. I called the spaniel to heel as I read, telling her, 'Cydney, you better listen up because you've got mail.'

'We have noticed,' the letter went on, 'that it is soon time for you to come in to the surgery for a visit.'

'This will give us the opportunity to say hello, complete a comprehensive health check and make sure there is adequate cover against preventable disease by administering the annual booster vaccinations.'

'This is also a great time to let us know how you and Cydney (Byrecoc Cinemon Jonquil) have been getting on...'

Getting on? What, in a social capacity? Or was the vet insinuating there might be subtle developmental problems requiring professional intervention — dog autism, perhaps?

'... and answer any questions you may

have.' Questions? What questions? I've been the owner of this spaniel for three years. I think if I had a question I would have asked it by now. I did once have some questions, like, 'Why won't she sit no matter how much I ask? Why does she think she is human and entitled to sleep in my bed, under the duvet with her head on the pillow? Why will she only eat Lily's Kitchen at £2.50 a tin?'

But the time for addressing those issues has past. I have given in to all of it. I have a gun dog who has become a lap dog. Any musings about this are entirely metaphysical and best answered by a philosopher, not a vet, along with, 'Why is my gun dog afraid of bangs? Thunder, fireworks, gunfire — all make her cower behind my legs.'

That is not much use if one is trying to get her to pick up pheasants. Ah, but hang on, now I think about it, I do have a question for puppy parents' evening.

How come vets order pet owners to vaccinate their animals every year for their entire life?

I fancy this too is existential. To the unsuspecting pet owner, it might appear that the annual booster demand — with or without parents' evening Q&A session — is purely to do with the animal's needs.

But when you look into it, it seems also to involve a complex yearning of the human soul for what is known as a 'licence to print money', or 'money for old rope' or 'having a laugh'.

I began delving into the issue because the demands for my three horses and one dog all come in October and nearly bankrupt me. It's £50 for the dog, once they've had me in there for an hour grilling me about her welfare and developmental opportunities, whether she's enjoying P.E., and so on.

It's hundreds for the horses because even though they live within a few minutes' drive of each other, that's still three separate call-out charges, before the vaccine costs.

This year, I made matters worse for myself by asking the vet, as he jabbed Darcy with flu and tetanus at the racing yard, if he thought the raised bump on her neck was a sarcoid. 'No.' The cost of that 'no' induced suicidal thoughts.

Desperate for mercy as another vet injected Gracie the pony a few days later, I asked if it was really necessary to drive round the corner to a nearby field, racking up a hundred quid on the way, to jab Tara, the retired mare, who is 30.

She probably only needed tetanus, the vet advised, and tetanus lasts two years so nothing was due until next year. Grace only had flu this year too. 'Oh goody,' I said. 'That must be cheaper?' Not really. Turns out flu and tet is £38, while flu on its own is £35.

And so to Cydney. Last year, when the vet jabbed the bejesus out of her with a combined vaccine, it brought her out in warts.

When I rang to make my appointment after getting the letter, therefore, I asked

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Alexander Chancellor



Lee, of course, was a brilliant general of great personal integrity, whose commitment to reconciliation with the North after the Confederacy's 1865 defeat in that bloody conflict earned him respect and admiration even among its former enemies. There are

Ken Livingstone implied something similar when in 2000, as mayor of London, he called for the removal from Trafalgar Square of the statues of General Sir Charles Napier and Major-General Sir Henry Havelock, though he drew the line at toppling Nelson from his perch. He, too, seemed to believe that statues of military heroes of the British empire were outdated symbols, though his main complaint about Napier and Havelock

The statue to Robert E. Lee is under threat as part of a 'racial reconciliation' initiative

‘But most importantly,’ it goes on, ‘the mayor’s focus should be on more pressing issues affecting the city. On the same day he made his intentions clear at the New Orleans City Council meeting, the city reached its 100th murder. Shouldn’t the “monumental” expense to relocate, rename, or remove any of these monuments or street names, or any symbol deemed offensive, be spent more effectively?’ I think so, especially on the pavements.

Susanna Gross

Many years and many children later, Lou is now a successful bridge teacher based in Somerset. I don't see as much of her as I'd like to, but she was in London recently for the magazine interview, and we managed to fit in a game at the Young Chelsea afterwards. The following deal shows just what a shrewd player she is. She was South, defending 3NT:

NS vulnerable

♣ J 9

Sitting North, I led the $\spadesuit J$, which ran round to declarer's $\spadesuit K$. Declarer began by playing on spades. Lou won the second spade and exited with her third. Declarer cashed his last spade and now thought for ages before deciding to try to end-play South in the hope she was short in clubs. He cashed the ace and king of clubs, and the ace of hearts, and then played the $\heartsuit 3$. Now it was Lou's turn to think. Had Lou ducked, declarer could have won with the $\heartsuit 10$ or $\heartsuit Q$. Now he would be up to eight tricks, and could exit with a heart: Lou could cash two hearts and the $A\spadesuit$ but she would then be forced to play a diamond to the $\spadesuit Q$. So Lou hopped up with the $\heartsuit K$ and now — crucially — cashed the $\spadesuit A$ and exited with a diamond to lock declarer in dummy. The last two clubs went to me — one down.

Chess

Winter of discontent

Raymond Keene

The two great Soviet world champion Russians, Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov, have almost always taken divergent paths. Karpov was the golden boy of the Soviet establishment, while Kasparov was an early supporter of glasnost and perestroika. A détente occurred when Karpov visited Kasparov in prison after he was incarcerated by the Putin regime for taking part in a public protest in Moscow. But their ancient opposition continues.

Kasparov's new book, *Winter Is Coming: Why Vladimir Putin and the enemies of the free world must be stopped* (Atlantic), is a challenge to the Kremlin and the Russian president. Kasparov prepared for its publication by emigrating to New York. Meanwhile, according to my old friend James O'Fee, who dined with him in Budapest last month, Karpov is busy with non-chess-related matters. He is a member of the Public Chamber of Russia, which analyses draft legislation and monitors the activities of the parliament, government and government bodies.

This week's game and puzzle show the two old warhorses in action against each other across the chessboard. Notes to the Karpov win are based on another Kasparov publication, one that is exclusively about chess, *Kasparov v Karpov 1986-1987* (Everyman Chess).

Karpov-Kasparov; World Championship, London/Leningrad (Game 17) 1986

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 Qb3 dxc4 6 Qxc4 0-0 7 e4 Bg4 8 Be3 Nfd7 9 Rd1 Nc6 10 Be2 Nb6 11 Qc5 Qd6 12 e5 Qxc5 13 dxc5 Nc8 14 h3 (see diagram 1) Karpov's home analysis showed that after this move Black's defence was very difficult as the prospects of the knight at c8 could be significantly restricted. **14 ... Bxf3 15 Bxf3 Bxe5 16 Bxc6** A surprise. Kasparov was expecting 16 Rd7, planning 16 ... e6 17 Bxc6 bxc6 18 f4 Bg7! 19 Rxc7 Re8 20 Rxc6 Ne7 21 Ra6 Reb8, and Black regains the pawn with sufficient counterplay. **16 ... bxc6 17 Bd4** White intends an exchange of minor pieces, leaving the opponent with a broken pawn structure on the queenside and a restricted knight on c8. **17 ... Bf4 18 0-0 a5?** An incorrect plan. 18 ... e5 — as in Karpov-Timman, played later at Tilburg, 1986 — would have enabled Black to

Diagram 1

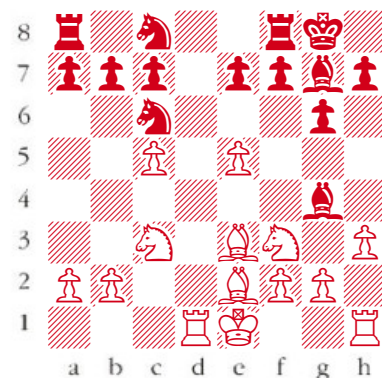
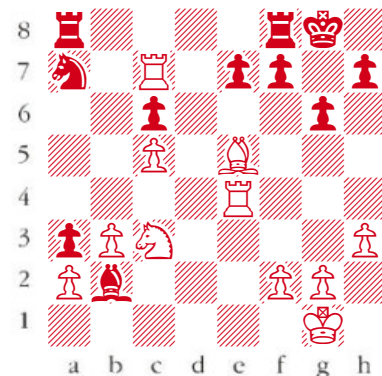


Diagram 2



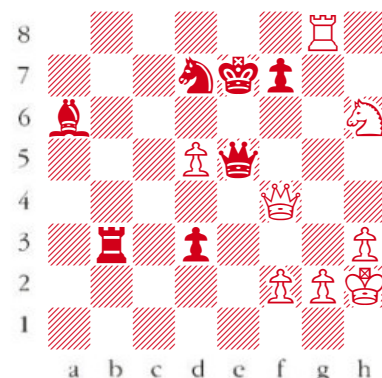
resist. **19 Rfe1** Now the knight on c8 cannot manage to get to the centre, and the game is essentially decided. **19 ... a4 20 Re4 Bh6 21 Be5 a3 22 b3 Na7** At last the luckless beast comes into play, but its imaginary freedom is acquired at too high a price. **23 Rd7 Bc1 24 Rxc7 Bb2** (see diagram 2) **25 Na4** The simplest and most convincing solution. After the incautious 25 Rxe7 Rfe8 keeps Black alive, for example: 26 Bd4 Rxe7 27 Rxe7 Rd8 28 Be5 Nb5 29 Nxb5 Bxe5 30 Rxe5 Rd1+ 31 Kh2 cxb5 32 b4 Kf8, and Black can still struggle on. **25 ... Nb5 26 Rxc6 Rfd8 27 Rb6** The main idea of White's strategy. He is not diverted by the capture of the bishop on b2, but tightens his grip. **27 ... Rd5 28 Bg3 Nc3 29 Nxc3 Bxc3 30 c6 Bd4 31 Rb7** Black resigns

PUZZLE NO. 386

White to play. This is from Kasparov-Karpov, London/Leningrad (Game 16). Kasparov saw this conclusion many moves in advance. White would be lost if he did not have one particular move. What is it? Answers to me at The Spectator by Tuesday 10 November or via email to victoria@spectator.co.uk. The winner is the first correct answer out of a hat, and each week there is a prize of £20. Please include a postal address.

Last week's solution 1 Ne6

Last week's winner Alex Jones, Ponteland, Northumberland



Competition

Fashion

Lucy Vickery

In Competition No. 2922 you were invited to invent new garments and provide definitions.

Thanks to the reader who, inspired by the emergence of the 'slanket', the 'cardi-gown' and the 'onesie', suggested this excellent comp.

It has been claimed that we have Sir Winston Churchill to thank for the onesie, which can be traced back to his siren suit. Britain's wartime leader designed this all-in-one with practical considerations in mind, but ended up with quite a collection in a variety of colours, patterns and fabrics. He once wore one to the White House, and so impressed the president's wife that she said she was having one made for her husband.

Both Brian Murdoch and W.J. Webster suggested *dungaroos* (a one-piece with a large pouch at the front to carry a baby). And C.J. Gleed and Frank Upton were thinking along the same lines with *me-shirt* (a garment adorned with the wearer's banal jokes, vacuous loyalties or boring opinions/a tee with a personal data matrix, linking to the wearer's social media profiles). I was also taken with Max Ross's *corbigan* (any piece of woollen informality worn on formal occasions); David Silverman's *minims* (denim jeans designed with so many holes in and so faded that you can hardly see any jeans); G.M. Davis's *emmanessy* (descriptive of naff mid-market clothing styles that vainly attempt to hit the fashion trend); and Chris O'Carroll's *costumestible* (an artificial fruit, vegetable, pastry, or other food item large enough to be worn as a costume).

The entries printed below earn their inventors £6 per garment.

Hungarees: jeans with extra room in the crotch

Purloincloth: stolen underwear

Blingerie: diamond-encrusted negligees and petticoats

Gaoloshes: prison shower clogs

Robert Schechter

Dronesie: a jumpsuit popular with USAF personnel charged with operating distance-killing

Beerstalker: headgear fitted with a concealed glass-sized pouch, popular with alcoholics who wander round parties stealing drinks

Albert Black

Flirt: a flared skirt styled in retro-acknowledgment of 1950s bobbysoxers (q.v.)

Lambretta: variation on traditional ecclesiastical headwear (esp. RC); a biretta made from lambskin

Mike Morrison

C-fronts: waterproof underwear worn by coastguards, lifeboatmen etc.
blueson: hair-shirt worn by the jilted, especially upon waking
Bill Greenwell

Mock jockney: Highland dress worn on formal occasions by men whose remote ancestors were Scottish
Luxedo: extremely expensive dinner jacket
Basil Ransome-Davies

Smellington Boots: gaily decorated waterproof footwear popular with teenage girls and worn for excessively long periods
Carolyn Thomas-Coxhead

Dockstrap: a jockstrap for the man who has undergone sex-change surgery.
Douglas G. Brown

Browsers: internet-connected legwear
Humpty: T-shirt with miserable slogan
George Simmers

Brainers: shoes with a brogue top and trainer bottom; designed for the smart but athletic businessman
W.J. Webster

Vaultfascinator: item of female headgear which looks great in the shop, vulgar at Royal Ascot
Gilletine: a cardigan from which the sleeves have been crudely cut so as to get the maximum use out of it
Adrian Fry

Kwilt: a padded tartan skirt guaranteed to keep the lower half of the body warm
C.J. Gleed

Beau tie: neckwear for gigolos
Reigncoat: the Queen's jacket
Asunderwear: Panties that conveniently separate into two pieces
Roger Slater

Thai: oriental cravat
Slappers: brash and noisy footwear, with bells on, to attract attention at parties
G.S. Roper

Obsessories: items added, superfluously, to the wearer's outfit, e.g., infinity scarves
John O'Byrne

Skousers: a cross between a skirt and trousers, worn by Liverpoolians
Knights: tights with built-in knickers
Jayne Osborn

NO. 2925: THE WINTER'S TALE

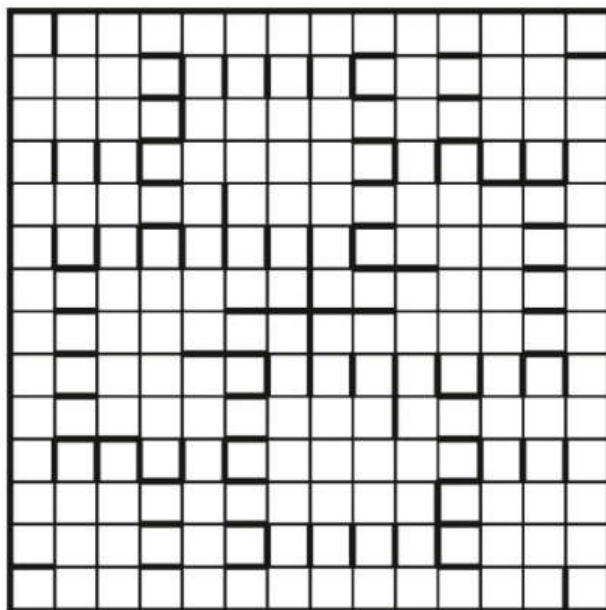
You are invited to submit a short story of up to 150 words entitled 'The Winter's Tale'. Please email entries, wherever possible, to lucy@spectator.co.uk by midday on 18 November.

Crossword

2236: Alphabetical jigsaw by Doc

This week's puzzle breaks away from the traditional thematic puzzle. Instead, here is an alphabetical jigsaw for solvers to tackle. Clues are presented in strict alphabetical order of their solutions which begin with the letters indicated from A through to Z. Solvers have to assign each solution to its correct place in the grid.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| A He discriminates about spirit (6) | — gave wrong info outside (9) | U Modus operandi without promos varied without any help (7) |
| A Embryonic formation developed Naomi (5) | N Wrote music to what a Mod was (7) | U Doesn't greatly estimate foreign articles' costs (10) |
| B Telephoned by a criminal — that's unacceptable (13, three words) | O Hooded asp regularly at stake (4) | V Over an' out in Italian city (6) |
| C Professional in Eire after trouble with work unit (10, two words) | O No dance rearranged on omnibus, finally (13, four words) | W Artist coming in, accompanying ghost (6) |
| C One Q stamp (4) | P Fairy left in danger (5) | X Revealer of unknown fish? (1-3) |
| C Two left in front of stagecoach (6) | P Books pop singer first, being peevish (8) | Y Longed for small change by December 31st? (7) |
| D Satisfaction from starting Doc's enigmatic clue (7) | P East European eats popular Indian food (6) | Z Girl in a daze, naturally (4) |
| E Give support to Cockney's losing nag? (7) | Q Wedges of old apples, cored (6) | |
| E Involved case before election return — something fishy here (8) | R Working-class American, embarrassed by cheek (7) | |
| F Laminate losing small area of acid (6) | R Lived — if quiet first, took the chair (7) | |
| G Plant's fiftieth anniversary stamp (10, two words) | R Sounds like an architect's hock (7) | |
| G Social interaction waving my scouring pad (13, two words) | R Spoke and summoned (4) | |
| H Leading lady taking two drugs (7) | S Son of Jacob distributed monies (6) | |
| I Looe guide confused doctrinaire supporter (9) | S Remain longer with prop attached (6, two words) | |
| I Welsh engine returns from the provinces (4) | S Nudes dancing round starting to dress — that's unexpected! (6) | |
| J Spirit flavoured with spirit, reportedly (6) | S Dish up crucial mix of oil of vitriol (13, two words) | |
| K Disputed state and Greek island with round hollow volcano (6) | T Weight of tuft hanging outside (4) | |
| K Mischievous goblin changes top in citadel (7) | T In short, this association is you in France! (10, two words) | |
| L Long-delayed coffee without one double (4) | | |
| M Gave wrong name to bird | | |



SOLUTION TO 2233: CLUTCHING AT STRAWS!

The unclued lights are CHEESES.

First prize M. Taylor, Eskbank, Midlothian
Runners-up D.G. Page, Orpington, Kent; Katherine Griffin, Winchester, Hants



Status Anxiety

When nature beats nurture

Toby Young

I've been doing some thinking recently about the findings of behavioural geneticists and their implications for education policy. For instance, a study of more than 10,000 twins found that GCSE results are nearly 60 per cent heritable. (This research, by Robert Plomin, was first revealed in *The Spectator*.) So genetic differences between children account for almost 60 per cent of the variation in their GCSE results, with the environment, such as the schools they go to, accounting for less than 40 per cent. One very obvious implication of this research is that we may need to lower our expectations when it comes to the impact schools can make on the underlying rate of social mobility.

But behavioural geneticists are upending our assumptions in other areas, too. Parenting, for example. Most middle-class parents, me included, believe that how you bring up your children has a major impact on their life chances. That's why we spend so much energy on getting them to put down their screens, do their homework, practise the piano, etc. But, as *The Spectator* also pointed out back in 2013, if you look at some of the biggest determinants of success — IQ, conscientiousness, grit — they are far more heritable than we like to imagine. Our children's destinies aren't set in stone from the moment of concep-



Our children's destinies aren't set in stone but the difference that a good parent makes is fairly negligible

tion, but the difference that a good parent makes is fairly negligible. The one crumb of comfort I've been able to dig up is that the ability to give and receive love isn't very heritable. Perhaps that's something we can teach our children?

What about art? One disturbing consequence of discovering that many of our personality differences have a basis in genetics is that plenty of western art — particularly popular arts, like Hollywood movies and genre fiction — turns out to be a lie. I'm thinking of stories that involve a hero going on a transformative journey and, in the process, changing from a passive, half-alive individual to being master of his own destiny.

But behavioural genetics teaches us that people rarely switch personality type after a pivotal experience. On the contrary, people seek out those environments that accentuate their genetic predispositions. In real life, those remarkable individuals that seem to cheat fate in some way are in virtually every case genetically exceptional. If they are more wilful than their peers, more imaginative, more energetic, it's because, to a great extent, that's the way God made them. They may feel like the authors of their own lives, but that's just a vainglorious self-deception. Wittgenstein came up with a good metaphor for this particular illusion. He said human beings are like autumn leaves being blown about in the wind, saying: 'Now I'm going to go this way, now I'm going to go that way...'

As for the great novels of European and American literature, they are almost laughably pointless. As I understand it, the point of a really

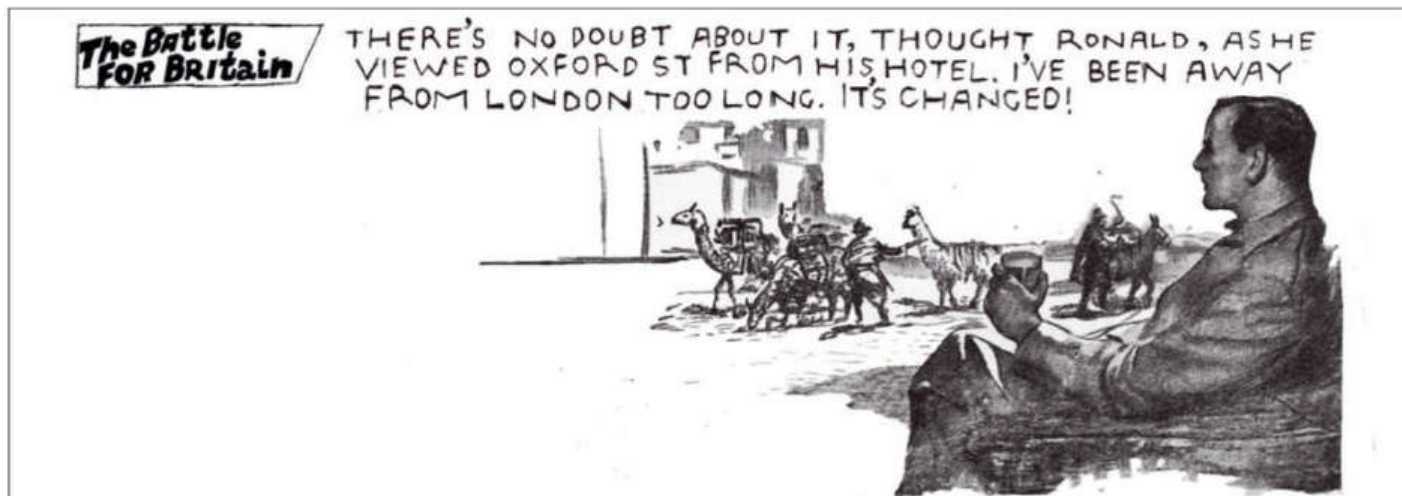
good novel is to enable you to commune with another soul and, by so doing, enlarge your sympathies and understanding. That's particularly true of the great social realists like Charles Dickens, Victor Hugo and John Steinbeck. Reading them is supposed to be morally improving — they acquaint us with the suffering of others in a way that's so moving and powerful it's impossible to ignore.

Unfortunately, the studies of criminality by behavioural geneticists lead to the conclusion that when it comes to good and evil, our choice is largely pre-ordained. The research evidence produced by twin, adoption and family studies reveals that antisocial behaviour, including criminality, is roughly 50 per cent heritable. More than half of prison inmates have mental disorders and the vast majority of those disorders are also predominantly heritable. Which explains why recidivism rates are so high. It really wouldn't matter if you played *The Grapes of Wrath* on the prison PA system 24/7 — most inmates would still reoffend as soon as they got out. According to America's Bureau of Justice Statistics, 77 per cent of prisoners released in 2005 were arrested for a new crime within five years. Which, come to think of it, renders most religious belief systems pretty pointless too — and needless to say, religiosity is approximately 50 per cent heritable.

We are in the midst of an intellectual revolution in which almost everything we believe turns out to be wrong. It's exciting, but profoundly discomfiting at the same time.

Toby Young is associate editor of The Spectator.

MICHAEL HEATH



The Wiki Man

The evolution of morals

Rory Sutherland

In December the controversial satellite TV channel ReallyTV launches its Christmas season with a flagship reality show called *From Homs to Hamburg*. A dozen refugees, accompanied by their families, will be given a budget of \$500 and two-days' water in a race to cross the German border using any form of transport. The prize for the winning family is a car and a two-bedroom flat in Billstedt. The show follows the success of the US reality TV show *Monterrey to Monterey*, in which Mexican families compete to cross the Rio Grande by hiding in shipping containers.

Now, before you recoil in disgust, I should just point out that nothing like this programme will be appearing this Christmas, because I made the whole thing up. ReallyTV does not exist.

But what interests me about this thought experiment is that almost every civilised person will regard this programme as repellent. And yet when, for a brief period, the German government announced that they would welcome all refugees who



The moral instincts that serve us well in judging small-scale actions fail when applied to larger groups

made it to Germany, few noticed that they were effectively creating a version of this competition on a giant scale. Both would cause people to embark on a risky undertaking with potentially fatal costs to those who failed. Yet most people find the TV programme horrible and the government programme admirable.

I wondered whether this showed a scaling problem — whether the moral instincts and intuitions which serve us very well in judging small-scale actions fail when applied to larger groups. Just then, in one of those freakish coincidences, an email arrived from David Sloan Wilson with a transcript of a 1985 talk by Friedrich Hayek.

Hayek: 'Our basic problem is that we have three levels of moral beliefs. We have, in the first instance, our intuitive moral feelings, which are adapted to the small person-to-person society, where we act toward people that we know. Then we have a society run by moral traditions, which — unlike what modern rationalists believe — are not intellectual discoveries of men who designed them. They are an example of a process that I now prefer to describe by the biological term of group selection.

'Those groups that quite accidentally developed favourable habits, such as a tradition of private property and the family, succeed but they never understood this.

'So we owe our present extended

order of human co-operation very largely to a moral tradition, of which the intellectual does not approve because it had never been intellectually designed. It has to compete with a third level of moral beliefs; the morals that intellectuals design in the hope that they can better satisfy man's instincts than the traditional rules.

'And we live in a world where the three moral traditions are in constant conflict: the innate ones, the traditional ones, and the intellectually designed ones... You can explain the whole of social conflicts of the last 200 years by the conflict of the three...'

If this is the kind of thing which interests you, allow me a small plug for economics.com — a new website which features views from people on the left and right who are agreed about one thing: that for economic and political thought to make useful progress, it needs to be informed by evolutionary biology. This seems a very necessary exercise, since any attempt to understand morality, politics, economics or business without reference to evolutionary biology is ridiculous. As I explain to my children, ants are Marxist, dogs are Burkean conservatives and cats are libertarians. And, as I explain to our clients, a flower is a weed with an advertising budget.

Rory Sutherland is vice-chairman of Ogilvy Group UK.

DEAR MARY YOUR PROBLEMS SOLVED



Q. I have lunch once a month with an old university friend. Over the years we have both thickened out but I now make a serious effort to curb my appetite. I will usually order one glass of white wine and a starter-sized mozzarella salad, but my friend invariably has the main course, the cheeseboard and three glasses of wine followed by a digestif. We've always split the bill but now that my 'share' is, for example, £20 to his £120, I have started to feel a tiny bit bitter about paying £70 — especially since I don't think he has noticed

the anomaly. After all this time, how can I suggest we divide the bill differently, without giving the impression that I have been harbouring a resentment? I love my friend and I know he's not exploitative, it's just that he doesn't think about these things and hardly notices what I eat.
— Name and address withheld

A. *Bring a slim friend to one of the lunches. Rehearse her to say, as you sit down, 'Is it all right if we each pay just for what we eat, rather than splitting the bill three ways? I deliberately haven't got much cash on me. It's my way of making sure I don't overdo it because I'm naturally very greedy.' This will allow you to cry: 'What a brilliant idea! I'm going to start carrying a tiny amount of cash every time I go out to lunch so I can curb my greed too.' Then*

turn to the bachelor — 'And you must promise you won't lend me the money if I go over my limit.'

Q. I am troubled by the sudden appearance, in fashionable areas of London, of young women with long shanks of hair dyed grey. I believe this unfortunate trend originated with Lady Gaga. How may I dissuade impressionable young godchildren from sporting this horrible hairstyle?
— C.C., Pershore

A. *When you next chance on one of these victims of fashion, scream and clutch your hand to your heart. Then gasp, 'Your hair gave me such a fright! Now I realise you must be still in your dear little Halloween disguise.' Smile sweetly and continue the conversation normally. The young will soon realise the error of their ways.*

Q. Newly minted new neighbours came to dinner the other night. Afterwards one of these went through to the kitchen and I glimpsed her through the door talking to my butler and cook as she openly tried to poach them. Fortunately my couple are loyal, but how could I have reprimanded this woman, as I feel she should know it's unacceptable?
— A.P., Malmesbury, Wilts

A. *You might have said 'It was so nice of you to thank my couple. None of my other guests ever dares to because of how it might look to me.' She would have inevitably have asked what you meant. You would have replied: 'Round here, poaching a couple is considered the ultimate breach of etiquette — and no one would normally risk it.'*

Drink

A new soul and a first growth

Bruce Anderson



Good Saturday, 2015, stepping westward. Autumn sunshine: autumn leaves, almost comparable to New England: pumpkins everywhere, very New England. We were in Sherborne, a town famous for its abbey and castle, but well worth a proper Pevsner-guided exploration.

There were obvious questions. When and how did the pumpkin take over from the turnip, 'trick or treat' from guising? Why is Halloween, All Souls' Night, both holy names, associated with witchcraft and other emanations of the dark? As with *Walpurgisnacht*, we are in the spirit-haunted marches between early Christianity and paganism. After nightfall, we walk in deep shadow. Is that light a turnip-bogle, as they used to say in Scotland before the era of the pumpkin? Or is it an eldritch light: warlocks in the mirk, searching for Tam o' Shanter? Even at the beginning of Advent, the old order can still muster its forces.

But we were not in search of architecture, antiquarianism, theology or ghost stories. We had come for lunch and found a perfect spot, The Green,

in the centre of town. The proprietor/chef is Sasha Matkevitch, a Russian. That influences his cuisine, especially the *zakuski*: in effect, Russian tapas. His food is thoughtful and inventive, most of it based on locally sourced meat, game, fish, vegetables and fungi. An accomplished forager, he knows where to find cepes and truffles. His ham hock was at least as good as any I have eaten, even when it was called *jambon persillé* in Burgundy.

It is, I suppose, a comment on the times that the restaurant feels obliged to offer a children's menu. Ned and Louis politely deflected that and were soon tucking into rare beef. But there is a problem with the proper menu. It is hard to decide what one does not want to eat. The wine list is full of interesting bottles, reasonably priced. This would be a perfect restaurant for a group of friends in search of a jolly Saturday lunch after a fossick around Sherborne, happy to swap and taste so that they could try as many dishes as possible.

From the jolly to the sublime. We were celebrating the birth of Arthur Richard Caractacus, a new soul at the

very beginning of his journey: still too young for wine. Others stood sponsor for him and drank an '85 Lafite en magnum. I tried to persuade his mother that it is unhealthy for girls who have recently foaled to drink first-growth claret. I was sure I had read something to that effect in the health columns which I religiously peruse. But she was not having any; or rather, she was.

It is a wine which has one struggling for superlatives and metaphors, with the obvious risk of sounding pretentious while failing to do justice to the subject-matter. It is a big wine, big as a mountain range. But it is also disciplined, structured and harmonious. The power of the grape responds to the vigneron's direction just as a great orchestra awaits the conductor's baton. When the new-born babe will have reached a mighty man's estate, that wine will still grace a glass.

The next day, I was able to confirm an impression from recent drinking. Early on, the 2003 Bordeaux vintage was often dispraised. It had been a very hot summer. The fear was that many of the grapes had been over-cooked and that the wines would lack subtlety and balance. Not so. With the Lafite setting a standard, I drank a Leoville-Barton 2003. It was delicious: perfectly at its peak, with hardly a sign of age. If you are lucky enough to own some, there is no hurry to finish it. This may be more generally true of the 2003s. It was undoubtedly an uneven vintage, but when the wines are good, they are excellent. Hugh Johnson extols the merits of the 2003 Latour. It will still be drinking well when young Arthur makes his first forays into viniculture.

The '85 Lafite is a wine which has one struggling for superlatives and metaphors



'Gentlemen, I propose one of us has a sex change.'

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Cis

'That's not how you spell "system";' said my husband triumphantly, pointing with his whisky glass at a placard inveighing against the 'Cistem', held up by a transgender protester on television. 'No, darling,' I said, not even assuming a patient tone. 'It's a play on words.'

Among people who like using the word *gender* outside its grammatical homeland, *cis*- as a prefix is tacked on, to make *cisgender*: 'someone whose sense of personal identity corresponds to the sex and gender assigned to him or her at birth', as the *Oxford English Dictionary* puts it



carefully. Note that it is not held to be a question of being the same sex as you were born, but the sex and gender *assigned* to you.

I confess to having fallen in with my late parents' blinkered decision to assign the female gender to me, a decision perhaps reinforced by my daughter Veronica's habit of calling me Mummy. That make me *cisgender*, or *cisgendered* as some express it.

In any case, we dull *cisgender* types have only had this label

since 1999. *Transgender* people have enjoyed theirs since 1974. *Transsexual*, or *transsexual*, came into use about 1957, but with at least four meanings: 'having physical sexual characteristics different from psychological ones'; 'being intersexual, neither male nor female'; 'being both heterosexual and homosexual'; 'having had surgery in pursuit of a sexual identity'.

So *cisgender* was coined in distinction from *transgender* as *cisalpine* was differentiated from *transalpine*. It depends on viewpoint. Just as *ultramontane* originally meant 'on the far side of the Alps from Rome', and later

the opposite, so did 'transalpine', as first viewed from Rome and later from England. Thus *transpontine* means (in London) the parts south of the river (as though everyone's viewpoint is from north of the river). In 1662, dear old Thomas Fuller wrote of Henry Stafford, something of a turncoat under Henry VIII and Queen Mary: 'I place him confidently not a trans-, but Cis-reformation-man.'

I feel that transgender campaigners have become silly, violent and intolerant. They will say that as a cis I have no right to speak on the matter.

— Dot Wordsworth

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ROBO INVESTOR

Your driverless portfolio has arrived, says Jonathan Davis

ENERGY BETS ROBIN ANDREWS AND FREDDY GRAY
SPEND IT WITH STYLE DIAMONDS FOR HER, FERRARIS FOR HIM



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Begin your own tradition.



You never actually own
a Patek Philippe.

You merely look after it for
the next generation.



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